PONHMA TO INETMATOR

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The GRACE and DUTY

OF BEING

SPIRITUALLY MINDED.

Stated and practically Improved.

By JOHNOWEN, D.D.

To be spiritually minded is life and peace. Set your affections on things above.

ABRIDGED
By HENRY MAYO, M.A.

LONDON:

Printed for R. and C. Dilly, in the Poultry, nearthe Mansion-House, M. DCC, LXVIII. From Alicenta de Alicentes

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PREFACE

THE writings of the learned and pious Dr. Owen, are so well known and esteemed, that no eulogium on his character and abilities, can be necessary to introduce the present abridgment into the world. When alive, he was remarkably blessed in the work of the ministry, and deservedly honored both by sriends and strangers; and now being dead, he yet speaketh in his excellent treatises, to the edification and comfort of mankind, and his praise will be great in every age.

Among his many printed works, THIS, on the grace and duty of Spiritual Minded-ness, shines with peculiar lustre; being admirably adapted, to search the heart, to detect the hypocrite; to instruct, strengthen, and comfort the real christian, and to quicken him in his advances towards heaven and glory. Viewing the performance in this light; and observing with continual forrow, the increase and spread of evil prin-

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ciples.

ciples, the carnal fecurity of professors, with their inordinate attachment to earthly things, by which thousands of souls misearry; observing also, the growing indifference of too many towards religious exercises, and holy duties; and their readiness to liften to unstable or artful men, who teach their followers to difregard the frame and disposition of their minds, and in effect, to regard nothing but faith, putting off all trial of their state, thoughts, and actions to the last day; observing, how many content themselves with a bare attendance in the fanctuary of God, and rest on their public religious duties, without examining into their principles and motives; observing, the fuperstitious attachment of many unto external forms and rites, and their excessive zeal for them, while they neglect justice, mercy, and brotherly love: in brief, observing the same manner of conversation and conduct among professors in the prefent day, as the reverend author of this treatife lamented in his; the EDATOR could not help wishing, that this valuable and uleful discourse on spiritual mindedness was univerfally

The was informed, there were but few copies to be procured at any price; and if the whole work had been republished, it would still have been too expensive for many, who want to be instructed in the great duty here inculcated, with which are connected life and peace eternal: these reasons, together with the repeated desires of friends zealous of promoting the spiritual welfare of their fellow immortals, engaged him to attempt the present abridgment.

All who are acquainted with Dr. Owen's works, must be sensible, that as he exhausted every subject he undertook, so there were many repetitions, the same thoughts frequently occur in different places; his stile also, like that of most of his cotemporaries, was rather prolix, and his method often intricate, and not easy to be remembered; which things to a judicious reader must be tedious and unpleasant. The Editor hath therefore taken the liberty of omitting what appeared to be redundant, of transposing some passages, of reducing the numbers of chapters, and also of making a little alteration in the Doctor's method

and stile: but the reader may be affored that nothing material hath been omitted; that the Author's real fentiments are preserved, and it is hoped his spirit also.

To recall christian professors to that strict mortification, to that separation from the world and its finful customs, to that contemplation of, and delight in spiritual things, to that heavenly mindedness, which the gospel of Christ requires; was the original delign of this work: and that these happy fruits may attend this abridgment of it, is the Editor's defire, and shall be his daily prayer.

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Think it necessary to give the heater a brief account of the nature and design of the following theatife, as it may direct him in the reading, land will be fome kind of apology for myself in publishing its

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The thoughts here communicated, note originally private meditations, in a featon when I was unable to do any thing for the edification of others, and far from expectation I ever should any more: when God was pleased to restore me, as I had received some benefit from this exercise of my thoughts. I insisted on the same subjects in the instruction of my congregation; apprehending also, that the duties set forth and enforced in the whole discourse, were always seasonable to be declared, and urged

on

on the minds of profesors. Leaving others to chuse their own methods, I acknowledge these are the two things, by which I regulate the whole course of my ministry: to impart those TRUTHS, of whose power I hope to have had a real experience; and to press those DUTIES, which present temptations, or other circumstances do render necessary, and deserving peculiar attention. As in the general work of the ministry the whole counsel of God is to be declared, so we are hever to fight uncertainly as men beating the air, nor shoot our arrows at random twithout a certain mark or delign. A good knowledge of the flock, whereof we are soverfeers, and a due confideration of their wants, temptations, light, graces, ftrength, and weakness, are requifice: and when the preparation of the word to be preached, proceeds also from zeal for God's glory and compassion to human fouls, when it is delivered with the demonstration of a due reverence unto God, whose word it is, and of authority towards the hearers, angether with a deep sense of that great account, which both they who preach, and is not be a fermion of or old molest author

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The first reason, why I judged the preaching and publishing this plain discourse on SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS, not unfeafonable at this time, is, the present importunity of the world to impose itself on the minds of men, and the various ways of infinuation, whereby it filleth them; and when the world fills the thoughts, the affections will be foon entangled, grace weakened, and the foul in danger of eternal ruin. Thoughts of the world and of earthly things are unavoidable and commendable, if their multiplicity and vehemence do not fo divert the mind, as to leave it no room or time for the entertainment of spiritual things : but how many men talk, and act, as if the world, which comparatively is nothing, was their all? the world hath, as it were, transformed the mind into its own image and likeness, and when such persons, or anywho are full of earthly affections attend to or perform spiritual duties, it must be very Carnal B 2 difficult.

difficult, if not impossible for them, to the up any grace to a due exercise: nor can the best of us be delivered at this senson, from so great an evil, without a watchful endeavour to preserve our minds in the constant contemplation of heavenly things, proceeding from the prevalent adherence of the affections to them, as will soon appear.

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Again, there are such pregnant evidences of the prevalency of a worldly frame of spirit, in many who make profession of religion, that'tis high time they were called to a due confideration, how opposite they are to the power and spirit of that religion which they profess . Every way, by which fuch a frame of spirit may be proved to prevail in the generality of profesiors, is manifest to all ; in their affected ornaments and dress, in their manner of conversation, their wafte of time, their over liberal entertainments bordering to excess, and in fundry other things, such a conformity to the world appears (tho feverely forbidden) that 'tis hard to make a diffinction a and as these things manifest a predominancy of carnal distant

carnal affections in the mind, to whatever may be presended, they are inconfiftent

with spiritual life and peace. The sales of

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To call men off from this evil frame of heart, to discover the fin and danger of it; to supply the thoughts and affections with better objects, to direct to ways and means of effecting it, to discover and prefs that exercise of foul, which is required of all professors, if they purpose life and peace, is the delign and work of the following treatife; and however weak the attempt, it hath these two advantages, it is scalonable, and fincerely intended: nay should this be its only fuccess, to provoke others possessed of more time and of greater abilities, to oppose the vehement and too successful infinuations of the world in the minds of professing christians, my labor will not be loft: things are come to that pass, that a more than ordinary vigorous exercise of the ministry of the word, and of other appointed means, is necessary to recall professors to that strict mortification, that separation from the ways of the world, that heavenly mindedness, that contemplation of spiritual things, and delight in them,

them, which the gospel of Christ doth require; else we shall lose the glory of our profession, and leave our eternal state very uncertain. To direct and provoke men to that, which is the only remedy of these sore evils, and which is the alone means of giving them a view and foretaste of eternal glory, is the design of this discourse, which is recommended to the grace of God for the benefit of every reader.

is the defign and work of the following treatile; and however weak the and it hath their two acres, it is begin able, and forcerely intended; may thought this be its only forced; to worker center it it it of more than and its order.

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HE expression in our translation is a little different from that in the original; in the margin we read, the "minding of the "spirit," and there is a great variety in reading of the words people to private; as the wisdom, the mind, the thought, the contrivance, the discretion of the spirit, and that which the spirit savoureth: but all our English translations from the very first (Tindal's) have constantly used the term "spiritually minded;" nor do I know any words, by which the emphasis of the original, and the design of the apostle can be better expressed.

The whole verse hath two propositions, containing a double antithesis; one in their subjects, the other in their predicates; the opposite subjects are the "minding of the sless, and the mind"ing of the spirit;" or the being carnally minded, and spiritually minded. These two dos

constitute:

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constitute the two states of mankind; unto one or other of which, every individual doth belong; he is under the ruling conduct of the stelle, or of the spirit; as to the qualities expected by these terms, there may be a mixture of them in the same person, there is so in all the regenerate; in them "the sless lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit susteth against the session of them as to good and evil a where either sech of them as to good and evil a where either sech of them as to good and evil a where either sech of them as to good and evil a where either sech of spirit hath a prevalent rule in the soul, there it makes a different state.

It is of the greatest moment, that we know to which we appertain; for the difference between these two states is great, the distance in a manner infinite; because an eternity of blessedness or mistery depends upon it; for the minding of the sless, but the minding of the spirit is

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life and peace.

I. To be "carnally minded is death." Death as absolutely penal, is either spiritual or eternal: it is formally, death spiritual; they that are carnally minded, who sulfill the desires of the stess and of the mind, are by nature children of wrath, and are penally under the power of spiritual death; they are "dead in fins, and the uncircumcidion of the stess." Ephes. ii. 1, 3. Col. ii. 13. It is likewise meritoriously, death eternal; "for if ye

ye live after the flesh ye shall die; the wages of sin is death." Rom. viii. 13. and vi. 23.

The reason why the apostle denounces so decadful a sentence and doom on the carnal mind, is, because the cannal mind is entirty against God, it is not subject unto the law of God, and they that are in the stell, cannot please God; if it be thus with the carnal mind, no wonder, that to be carnally minded is death, it is not meet it should be any thing else; that which is entirty against God, is under his curse. But in opposition hereto, it is affirmed,

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II. That to be "SPIRITUALLY MINDED, is life " and peace." Let us particularly see, what this minding of the spirit is, and then, how it is life and peace.

What is implied in minding of the Spirit? the word spirit is often used in a double sense; as for the Spirit of God, or the Haly Ghaft, who is in the content and other places, spoken of as the efficient cause of all the spiritual mercies that christians do enjoy; and the word is also used for THAT PRINCIPLE of spiritual life, which is communicated to all real christians, by the Holy Ghost; " for that which is born of the spirit, is spirit," John in the Most probably, spirit is in the Text used in the lagter fense, for that which is born of the spirit, the principle of spiritual life, which in its nature, actings, and operations, is opposed unto the field, that corrupt B 5 principle

principle of depraved nature, whence all evil thoughts and actions do proceed : unto this fairit, or holy vital principle of spiritual life and new obedience, wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, there is pervape ascribed, which ftrongly expresseth the actual exercise of the power of the mind : hence we translate eevery, " to think," Rom xil. 3. that is to conceive and judge; fometimes it fignifies, to " fet the " affections," Col. iii. 2. or to have such an apprehension of things, as to cleave unto them with our affection. Again, " to mind," Phil. iii. 10. mind earthly things, which includes that rehish which the mind finds in the things it is fixed upon. No where doth it delign only a notional conception of things; but chiefly the engagement of the affections to the things differned and apprehended by the mind : fo that the minding of the fpirit, is the actual exercise of the mind, as renewed by the Holy Ghoft, as furnished with a principle of spiritual light and life in its conception of fpiritual things, and the fetting of its affections on them, as finding that relish and favour in them, wherewith it is pleafed and fatisfied. I will be ented all danha toda col

But let it be observed, this definition of the minding of the spirit," is not spoken of at to what it is in itself absolutely, but with respect to its power and prevalence in us, significantly rendered spiritually minded; the mind is continually acted or

or influenced thereby to thoughts and meditations of spiritual things, from the affections cleaving unto them with delight and fatisfaction; fo on the contrary it is the fame, when men mind earthly things; therefore to be spiritually minded includes three things :

1. The actual exercise of the mind in its thoughts. they that are after the fielh, do mind the things of the flesh, they think on them, their defires are after them, and their contrivances are continually for them: But they that are after the fpirit, mind the things of the spirit; their desires are after. their thoughts and meditations are on things ipiritual and heavenly.

2. This minding of the spirit, resides babitually in the affections, fo that spiritual mindedness is the exercise of the thoughts on, and aspirations of the foul in its defires after, spiritual things, proceeding from the love of its affections, and their

engagements unto them.

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3. A complacency of mind, from that guft or delight which it finds in spiritual things, from their suitableness to its constitution, frame, inclinations, and defires : there is a SALT in spiritual things to the renewed mind, while to others, they are like the white of an egg without talke or favour : speculative notions about divine things, when alone, are fapless and barren; its in this lavour of them, that the fweetness and satisfaction. of the spiritual life consist; thus, we taste by experience.

ce that God is gracious, and that the love rist is better than wine, or whatever hath the most grateful relish unto a sensual appetite; and this is the only proper foundation of that joy, which is unipeakable and full of glory.

As these three things concur in minding of the spirit, or constitute a person spiritually minded; fo you must have remarked the twofollowing important truths, as directly contained: in the text.

E That spiritual mindedness is the great distinguishing character of true believers, or realchristians, from all others; and

2. Where any are spiritually minded, thereslone is life and peace; what these are, what sheir excellency and preeminence above all other shings, and how they are the effects of spiritual

mindednels, will be showed hereafter.

Either of these considerations, is sufficient todemonstrate of how great concernment to us. this subject is; and must excite us to enquire diligently, whether we are spiritually minded, or There are many professors, who greatly deceive themselves in this important point; they admit of facred truths, with their understanding they affent to them, yea they approve and oftencommend them; but admit not their power inand over the confcience, nor judge of their flate: by them, which proves their ruin, and demongrates that they believe not one fyllable of christianity

IJ

christianity as they ought : again, there are others who "like a man beholding his face in a glafs, goeth his way, and firaightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." James i. 24. The word of God represents unto them their spiritual state and condition; they behold it, and conclude that 'is even fo with them, as the facred oracles declare : but immediately their minds are filled with other thoughts, acted by other affections, and takenup with other things, and they forget in a moment the representation of themselves, and their fituation: wherefore, all that will or can be mentioned on this subject, will be utterly loff, unless a firm persuation hereof be fixed in our breafts. unless we are really affected with, and under the power of this momentous truth, to that to be forritually minded is life and peace:" whatever our light, knowledge or profession may be, destirute of minding the fpirit, there is no real interest in, nor any claim to life and peace.

I shall now more practically open the nature of this duty, which may be considered either asto the ESSENCE of it, or its degrees; for one man may be so more than another, or the same person may be more so at one time, than at another. In the first way, its opposed unto carnal mindedness; in the other, unto being earthly minded.

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Carnal mindedness is opposed unto being spiritually minded; as to its nature and essence: where

a man as to the substance and being of the grace and duty, is not spiritually minded, he must be carnal; dead in trespasses and sins, and obnoxious unto death eternal; and as this is the principal soundation on which we proceed, so it demonstrates the indispensible necessity of that frame of

mind, here declared and enjoined.

Earthly mindedness may be considered two ways; as ABSOLUTE, when the love of earthly things is wholly predominant in the mind; this is a branch from the root, an operation of the carnal mind in one especial way, and is as exclusive of salvation as carnal mindedness: when there is in any a predominant love of earthly things, that person may be truly skiled earthly minded, and he hath no interest in the frame of spirit intended in the text: but alas! is not this evidently the case of the greatest part of nominal christians, let them pretend what they will to the contrary?

Again, earthly mindedness consists in an INOR-DINATE AFFECTION to the things of this world: This is sinful and ought to be mortified, but it is not absolutely inconsistent with the substance or essence of the grace enquired after: some who are truly spiritually minded, yet may (for a time at least) have such inordinate affections to, and care about earthly things, that compared with what they ought to be, and might be, they may be justly denominated earthly minded; they are so in respect respect of those degrees of spiritual mindedness. which they should aim at, and might attain ; and they do not consider, that where this inordinate affection is, the other can never flourish, spiritual mindedness can never advance to any eminent degree. And yet this is the Zoar of many profesfors, that little one in which they would be foured: they would avoid that species of earthly mindedness, which is wholly inconsistent with being spiritually minded; such a frame they know is inconfiftent with falvation, and absolutely exclusive of life and peace: But there is a degree in being earthly minded, which they perfuade themselves, their interest, advantages, relations and occasions of life do call for, and in which they would be a little indulged; flattering themselves, that this will by no means disparage their profession. and is very confiftent with being spiritually minds ed; though it may be short of that height, or contrary to those degrees in that grace, which are recommended to them. And the truth is, they have too many companions to fear any reproach, or fevere reflection upon themselves; the multitude of the guilty takes away the fense and shame of the guilt : Professors cannot but esteem spiritual mindedness in its most eminent and exalted degrees, as excellent and defirable, and in general think well of those who attain it; but it is for them who are more at leifure than they are. of Sarangels of all and promoting their

idea of all the time than the

their circumitances and connections require them to fatisfy themselves with an inferior measure.

As it is to be feared, that far the greatest number of those, who satisfy themselves in this apprehension, and who wishingly neglect endeavours after further degrees of grace, which their light, convictions and the means they enjoy, do suggest to them as reasonable, and of the utmost importance, are indeed carnally minded; so to obviate such pretences, I shall insist on nothing in the declaration of this duty, but what is incumbent on all that believe in Christ, and without which they have no grounds to assure their conscience before. God.

would be a littled of the a theory themselves,

The grace and duty of spiritual mindedniss.

of tated in and evidenced by our thoughts.

TAVING, in a general way, explained that frame of mind recommended by the Apostle in the text, we proceed to emquire more particularly into its nature, according to the former defeription and method. It will be my great concern to show you, what it is, and how it evidences briefly so as that we may form a right judgment whether it is in us or not y and woe be to them who neglect, or despite these things on any pretence whatever; for this is the word, by which

we fall foon bejudged, "to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace;"

Although the foundation of the whole duty, lies in the affections, and their immediate adherence to spiritual things; yet as the THOUGHTS are the first genuine actings of the mind, according to the prevalence of the affections, and as they make the best discovery of what nature is the spring, from which they arise; I shall begin with them.

I. Thoughts as proceeding from spiritual affections, are the first things which characterize spiritual mindedness, and whereby it evidences itfelf: our thoughts are like the bloffoms on a tree in the fpring. In the foring we fee trees covered with bloffoms, but multitudes of them fall off and come to nothing; yea often, where there are mole bloffoms, there is leaft fruit: however, there is no fruit of whatever kind or fort, whether good or bad, but comes from fome of those blosfoms: Thus, the mind of man is covered with thoughts, as a tree with bloffems; most of them fall off, come to nothing, end in vanity; and fometimes where the mind most abounds with them, there is the least fruit; the fap of the mind is wasted and confumed in them; but still there is no fruit we bring forth, be it good or bad, but proceeds from some of these thoughts: They give the best measure, and strongest evidence of the frame of the mind; "as a man thinketh in his. heart.

heart, fo is he." Prov. xxiii. 7. In case of strong or violent temptations, the real frame of a man's heart is not to be judged by the multiplicity of thoughts about any object; as when a man is in a fform at fea, the current of his thoughts runs quite another way, than when he is in fafety: But in general, voluntary thoughts are the best indication of the frame of our minds; as the nature of the foil is judged by the grass it produces, so may the disposition of the heart by the predominancy. of voluntary thoughts: They are the original acting of the foul, the way by which the heart empties the treasure that is in it. Every man's heart is his treasury, and the treasure that is in it is either good or evil; whatever a man hath, be it good or evil, there it is; this treasure is opening and spending itself continually, though it can never be exhausted; it hath a fountain both in nature and grace, which no expence can diminish, yea it increaseth by it; whether it be good or evil, the treasure of the heart increases and abounds by expence and exercise, and the principal way in which it exerts or spends itself, is by the thoughts. If the heart be evil, they are for the most part vain, filthy, corrupt, wicked; if it hath that good treasure GRACE, it is displayed by thoughts fuitable to its nature.

Wherefore, these voluntary thoughts, which the mind of its own accord is apt for, and naturally bath recourse to, best indicate the true frame thereof:

inday!

thereof: Indeed men may have a multitude of thoughts about the affairs of their callings, which give no due measure of their inward frame; fo ministers whose calling and work it is to study the scriptures, and to preach their contents to others; they cannot but have many thoughts about fpiritual things, and yet may be, and oftentimes are most remote from being spiritually minded; they may be forced by their office to think of them evening and morning, early and late, and yet their minds thereby, be no way rendered, or proved spiritual. It were well if all who were preachers would diligently examine themselves herein. Menmay read many chapters every day of their lives. and ministers may diligently study and preach, and yet be far from spiritual mindedness. But as fome men from their callings in life, and as all men, unless horribly profligate, have thoughts about spiritual things, more or less, and yet we know that all are not spiritually minded; we must fee what is requifite, to render-our thoughts a certain indication of the state of our minds; and the two following particulars are the chief and effential. o Amber and waiting as aid well

I. That they be natural, arising from ourselves, and not from outward occasions; and,

II. That they abound and abide in us, our

I. The thoughts that display and evidence the true state of the mind, are such as are NATURAL, arising

arifing from ourselves, and not from outward occasions. Inward thoughts are such as arise folely
from mens principles and dispositions, not suggested or excised by any outward objects. Such
in wicked men are those actings of their lusts,
whereby they entice and seduce themselves. Jam.
is 14. Their lusts stir up thoughts leading them to
make provision for the stefn; these are their inward thoughts, the first natural egress and gemuine acting of the habitual disposition of the
soul.

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Thus in coverous men, there are two forts of thoughts, by which their coveroufacts acts ! The first, occasioned by outward objects; so it was with Achan, is when I faw among the spoils " a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred frekels of filver, and a wedge of gold, then " I coveted them." Joth. vil. 21. His fight of, with an opportunity of policiling them, excited covetous thoughts and defires in him; and fo it is with others every day, whose affairs call them to converse with the objects of their lufts; and fome by fuch objects may be surprized into thoughts to which their minds are not habitually inclined therefore when known, its our daty to avoid such objects: But the fame fore of persons have also thoughts of this nature ariling from themselves only; from their own disposition and inclination without any outward provocations. "The vile person will speak villainy, and his " heart arifor.

heart will work iniquity," Ifaish wxxii. 6. and this he doth; even as "the liberal man de-" vifeth liberal things;" from his own disposition: So the unclean person respecting the satisfaction of his lufts, hath fome thoughts occasioned by external objects; revellings, intemperance, dancing with bold and lewd company, unchafte novels, plays, &c. greatly contribute to excite those thoughts, and provoke him to the wicked fervice of his bufts; but he hath an bebinel foring of these thoughts in himself, constantly inclining and disposing him thereunto; bence the Apostie Peter fays, that fuch persons if have eyes full of "an adulteres, that cannot cease from fin?" 2 Pet ii. 14-1 Their own affections make them reftless in their thoughts and contrivances about fin : So is it with those who are given to excels in wine or frong drink; they have pleasing thoughts raised in them, from the object of their luft fronting in their view, hence Solomon pave that advice against the occasion of them, " look not " thou on the wine when it is red, when it giveth " its colour in the cup; at the last it biteth like a " ferpent and fringeth like an adder." Prov. xxiii. But his their own habitual disposition, which carries them unto pleasing thoughts of the fatisfaction of their lufts; and fo is it in other cases which might be mentioned . The thoughts of this latter fort, are mens inward natural, woluntary thoughts; and if it he to on the one fide, 33

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as unto the carnal mind, it is fo on the other as to the spiritual; there is an habitual disposition in the spiritually minded, a living sulness of spiritual things in their minds, that continually and voluntarily springeth up into holy thoughts about them.

. Hence doth our Saviour give us the great defcription of SPIRITUAL LIFE: It is " a well of livsing water springing up into everlasting life." John iv. 12. The spirit of Christ, with his graces refiding in the heart, are a well of living water; not ufeless like other wells of water, unless there are instruments to draw withal; but of its own accord, it fends out refreshing water, and is continually fpringing up to the use and comfort of all that have it within them. It of and from itself, without any external influence, inclines and dispoles the foul unto spiritual thoughts and actions which tend to eternal life. The pious thoughts of the spiritually minded, arise, and naturally proceed from the inward principle and disposition of the foul; and where it is not thus with our thoughts, they give no evidence of that which is enquired after. Men may have many and frequent thoughts of spiritual things, which do not arise from this principle, but may be juffly resolved into two other causes, inward force and outward occasions. ban pallit

1. Inward force, as it may be stilled; this is by conviction. Convictions put a kind of force upon the mind, or cause it to act contrary to its habitual

bitual inclination. Tis the nature of water to defeend, but apply an inftrument that shall compress it, it will fly upwards vehemently, as if that were its natural motion; but as foon as the force of the impression ceaseth, it returns immediately, descending towards its center: So is it with mens thoughts; they are earthly, their natural motion is downwards to the earth, and the things thereof; but when any powerful conviction preffeth on the mind, it forceth the egress of its thoughts upwards to heavenly things, and the foul will think much and frequently of them, as if that was its proper motion and courfe, but as foon as the power of the conviction wears off, the thoughts return again to their old course, as the water tends downward.

This flate is particularly described Pfal. Ixxviii. 35. 66 when he flew them, then they fought him, ss and they returned and enquired early after God; and they remembered that God was their " rock, and the high God their Redeemer : nevertheless they did but flatter him with their " mouths, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with " him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant," Men in troubles, dangers, sickness, and the views of death, or under conviction of fin from the preaching of the word, will endeavour to think and meditate on spiritual things, and be greatly troubled that they cannot think of them, more than gives

chan they do, but as deliverance approaches, to thefe thoughts decay and difappear; the mind will not be compelled to give place to them any more, its habit and inclination is unother way, and the man no longer regards spiritual things, than convictions imprefs there's charmes gainned

But if our thoughts of spiritual things do rife or fall, according as we are under rebukes from God, in our own persons or relations, or in seas of death and the like; if thefe thoughts decline, as our occasional convictions and their causes do wear off, or are removed; we certainly have attained but a very low degree in this grace, if we have any interest in it at all. Water that floweth from a living fpring, runs equally and confiantly, unless softructed or diverted, but that which is from thunder thowers, runs furiously for a feafon. and is quickly dried up ! To are those spiritual thoughts which artie from a prevalent internal principle of grace, they are even and conflant, unless interrupted for a featon by temptations, but those which are excited by the thunder of convictions, however their freams may be filled for a feafon, they quickly dry up and utterly decay. You at a land ball your oron is drive , mich ?

2. Outward occasions. Spiritual thoughts may arise in the minds of men not spiritually minded, from outward means. Where you till or manure land, if it brings forth plentiful crops, tis an evidence that the foil infelf is good; the dreffing only dada

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gives occasion and advantage to the earth to put forth its own fertile virtue; but if in tilling of land, much dung is laid upon it, and it brings forth but here and there an handful where the manure lay, doubtless the foil is barren, and we say it brings forth nothing of itself: The means I shall treat of, are as the tilling of a fruitful soil, which helps it in bringing forth its fruit, by exciting its own virtue and power; they stir up holy affections unto holy thoughts and desires: But in others whose hearts are barren, they only serve here and there, or now and then, to excite spiritual thoughts, which give no evidence of a gracious heart, or spiritual mind.

I. One of these means or occasions, is the preaching of the word. It is observed of many in the Gospel, that they heard it willingly, received it with joy, and did many things gladly upon the preaching thereof, which could not be without many thoughts about spiritual things; and yet they were all hypocrites concerning whom thefe things were spoken, and were never spiritually minded: And we see the same thing exemplified in multitudes daily. The cause of this miscarriage, is affigned by our Saviour, "He that re-" ceiveth the feed into stony places, the same is " he that heareth the word, and receiveth it with " joy, yet hath he not root in himself, but dur-"eth for a while." Mat. xiii. 20. 21. Neither their affections nor their thoughts of spiritual things

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things have any internal root, whereon they should grow, or proceed from any principle in themselves. I here speak not of them who are either despifers of what they hear, or waylide hearers, who understand nothing of what is preached, and immediately lose all sense of, and all thoughts about it; but I mean fuch who attend with fome diligence, and receive the word with some joy: These cannot be without some thoughts of spiritual things, though for the most part they are like to waters that run after a shower of rain: they pour on, as if they proceeded from fome frong living fpring, whereas they have none at all, and when the waters of the shower are spent, the channel is dry, nothing in it but stones and dirt. Thus when the doctrine of the word diffils on fuch perfons, it gives a course fometimes greater and sometimes less to their thoughts, respecting spiritual things; but they have not in them a well of water springing up to everlafting life, wherefore these thoughts foon pale away and nothing remains but earth.

It must be observed that the best and most spiritual minded may, and ought to have their thoughts of fpiritual things excited, multiplied, and confirmed by the preaching of the word; it is one grand end of its dispensation; but where men have no other spiritual thoughts, but what are occasioned by hearing the word preached, fuch thoughts do not prove them to be spiritually

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minded. The thoughts which proceed from an inward principle, excited to due exercife, may be eafily diffinguished from those which are only occasionally suggested to the mind, by this outward means: as (1.) they are actings of faith and love towards the things that are preached; they belong to our " receiving the truth in the love " thereof;" love respects the goodness of the things, and not merely the truth of the propofitiens expressed in them : the other thoughts are only the fense of the mind, as affected with light and truth, without any cordial love to the things themselves. (2.) They are accompanied with complacency of foul, arifing from a love and experience of the power of them, and their fultableness to the new nature, or spiritual principle within them; for when we find that fo indeed it is in us, as it is in the word of God, and that this is that to which we would be more conformable; it gives a fecret complacency and much pleasure to the mind; and is a means of spiritual growth: But the other thoughts which are only occasional, have none of these concomitants or effects; they are dry and barren, unless it be in a few words or transient discourse.

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II. The duty of prayer, is another means of the like nature. One principal end of it, is to excite and draw forth the principle of grace in the heart, to a due exercise in holy thoughts of God and spiritual things, with suitable affections; the

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persons who design not this end in prayer, know not at all what it is to pray. All sorts of professors have frequent occasion to join with others in prayer, and many are convinced 'tis their own duty to pray every day, both in their families and otherwise: Now 'tis hard to conceive, how men can constantly join with others in prayer, much more how they can pray themselves, and yet be destitute of spiritual thoughts: they must have thoughts of spiritual things every day, but it is possible they may have no root, only occasional impressions on the mind, from the outward performance of the duty.

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Spiritual thoughts may be excited in a person by the exercise of his gifts, the spiritual improvement of natural faculties and abilities; and it is impossible but they must: A man indeed may read a long prayer that expresseth spiritual things, and yet never have one spiritual thought arise in his mind about them; for there is no exercise of any faculty of the mind requisite unto fuch reading, but only to attend unto the words that are to be read; this may be, I do not fay, that it is always, or that it must be so: But in the exercise of gifts, there must be an exercise of reason, by invention, judgment, and memory, and consequently thoughts of spiritual things; yet may they all be merely occasional, from the present performance of the duty, without any living spring or exercise of grace: In such a course

course may men of tolerable gifts continue all their days, to the satisfaction of themselves and others, deceiving both them and their own souls.

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ch a ourse This being evident from scripture and experience, it highly concerns us to ask, how we shall know whether the thoughts we have of spiritual things in or by prayer, do arise from gifts only, or are influenced from a living genuine principle in our hearts? A case this of great importance, and which I shall endeavour briefly to resolve.

It is an ancient and true complaint, that spiritual things are filled with great obscurity and difficulty; not that they are fo in themselves, for they all come forth from the Father of lights? and are full of light, order, beauty and wisdom; the ground of all darkness and difficulty in these things, is in and of ourselves. We know but in part, and our minds are liable to be hindered. and difordered in their apprehensions of spiritual things, by ignorance, temptations and prejudices of all kinds: there is also a great similitude between temporary faith, and that which is faving. and between gifts and grace in their operations; and fear, and felf love, with the prevalency of temptations and corruptions, do all engage their powers to darken the light of the mind, and to pervert its judgment; and hence it is to be feared the greatest part of mankind do constantly de-C 3 ceive

ceive themselves, and put off all trials of their flate, thoughts, and actions, to that at the laft day. But if men are not willing to deceive themselves, and accordingly, impartially and severely examine and try the frames and actings of the mind in religious duties by the word of truth, and freak that plainly to their fouls, which the word speaks; and to their own diligent enquiry, add frequent prayers unto God, that he would fearch and try them, and discover to them the true frame of their bearts; I no way doubt, but they would foon come to affered fatisfaction; whether their foiritual thoughts in prayer proceed from an inward vital principle, or whether they come from occasional impresfions by means of the duty. In general we are affured, "that he that believeth, bath the wisof nels in himfelf." Tohn v. 10. Sincere faith will be its own evidence, and its fruits will evidence themselves, if tried impartially by the divine word; but if men content themselves with the performance of any duty, without an examination of their principles, frames and motives, no wonder they walk at an absolute uncertainty.

To give some fatisfaction in a case of such great importance and necessity, now hypocrify hath made such an inroad on profession, and gifts have imitated, and usurped over grace in its principal operations: Observe,

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(1) When the foul finds a for itual complacency an inward pleafure in and after prayer and other duties, it is an evidence that grace had a fhare and influence in its fairitual thoughts and defires, The prophet Jeremiah received a gracious meffage from God, full of excellent promifes, and pathetic exhartations unto the Church; 44 upon " this, faid be, I awaked, and beheld, and my 4 fleep was fweet unto me." Chap. wxxi. 26. God's mellage had so composed his spirits, thet he was ferene and quiet like a man affeep; but afterwards he firs up bimfelf to review and con fider what had been spoken to him, and faith he, " my fleep was fweet unto me :" I found a fiveet complacency in, and great refreshment to my foul. from what I heard and received : So is it often with a foul that hath had real-communion with God in prayer; an the time, and afterward on the confideration of it, how is the christian delighted and refreshed. This holy complacency and fweet repose of mind, is the foundation of every christian's delight in the duty of prayer; they do not pray merely because it is their duty, nor because they so fland in med of it, that else they could not live; but they have delight in it, and to keep them therefrom, is all one as to keep them from their daily food and natural refreshment. Now we may use, but can have no dear light in any thing, unless we have experienced fome complarency and reft; and the foul's delight

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light in prayer, arifeth from the near approach that is made in it unto God, the fountain and center of all spiritual rest and complacency; and the fruit hereof is, he makes them that thus feek him, to drink of the river of his pleafures, the fatisfying refreshing streams of his grace and goodness; they approach unto him, as to the fountain of life, to drink, or obtain renewed communications of life and grace, and this not in vain; hence arises that spiritual complacency: Tho' I might add, that a bleffed fatisfaction refults to the foul, from the due exercise of faith, hope and love, graces in which the life of the new creature doth chiefly confift; the exercise of these graces doth compose and refresh the mind, (even in) mourning and godly forrow for fin, there is joy)! and it prepares and makes the foul mete to receive more supplies of grace from above; and thus conscience is enabled likewise to bear testimony to our fincerity, in the aim, performance; and end of the duty, which greatly strengthens the mind's repose, and adds to its complacency and joyd near an kel med to the classified also mis raise had

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If we have no experience of these things, it is evident we walk at random in the best of our duties, and neither profit by, or give glory unto God in it; but yet here, as in most other spiritual things, one of the worst of vices is ready to impose itself on us, in the place of the best of graces; self-pleasing in the performance of the duty,

duty, a vile effect of spiritual pride: A secret felf-pleafing, because of enlargement in expreffions, or from an apprehension that others are affected and pleased with our manner and matter, before we are aware turns into pride and a noxious elation of mind, and is directly opposite to that spiritual complacency just mentioned: One is in God alone, the other is in felf; that draws forth the favour of all graces, this covers and buries them all, if there be any in the foul; that fills the foul eminently with humility, this with proud felf-conceit; that casts out all remembrance of what we have done ourselves, retaining only a fense of what we have received from God, the impressions of his love and grace: but this base pretender blots out all remembrance of what we have freely received from God, and retains only what we have done ourselves: wherever this is, there is no due sense either of the greatness or goodness of God.

(2.) It is a fure evidence that our thoughts of spiritual things in prayer, are from an internal gracious spring, and not merely occasioned by the duty, when we find the daily fruit and advantage of them, especially in promoting a watchful, humble, holy frame of mind. Innumerable are the advantages and effects of prayer; growth in grace and confolation is the substance of them. Where there is continuance in prayer, there will be spiritual growth; if a C 5

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man eats: his daily food, let him dat never fo much, or fo often, if he te not nourished by it, his body is under the power of prevalent diflempers; and fo with respect to the spiritual confliction, for a man to be carnell in prayer, but not thrive in the use of this food of the new creature, is a certain indication of prevalent corruptions, and of his not being spiritually minded in prayer. He who prays as he ought, will endeavour to live as he prays; this no one can do who doth not with diligence keep his heart to the things for which he prays: to pray earnestly, and live carelefly, is proclaiming aloud . I am not spiritually minded." Hereby then, we hall know what is the fpring of those spiritual thoughts, which occupy the mind in prayer is if the thoughts lead or influence to a conftant daily watch for the prefervation of that frame of fairit, and of those inclinations to spiritual things for which we pray, they are from an internal fpring of grace; but if there be generally an unfuitableness in our minds, to what we seem to contend for in our prayers, the gift may be in exercise, but the grace is wanting. A man may be every day on the Exchange, and there talk differently and earnestly about trade and merchandize, but when he comes homehe thinks no more of them, having no interest in them, and may be also very poor, notwithstanding all his talk and parade; so he may be spiritually very poor, who on occa-Lons

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flow is fervent in prayer, if when he retires he is not careful about the matter, and diligent for an interest in it.

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(1) When spiritual affections do excite and animate the gift of prayer, and not the gift imprefs the affections, then are we spiritually, minded in the duty. Gifts are fervants, not nilers in the mind; bestowed on us to be serviceable unto grace, not to lead but to follow it, and to be ready to affift its operations. This is the natural order in grace babitually, inclines and disposes the heart to prayer, providence and rule give the occasions for its exercise, and sense of duty calls for preparation a fo-grace coming into actual exercise, gifts thep in with their affillance, but if they lead, all is out of order. Indeed, fometimes it may be otherwise: A person indifpoled and lifeless, (on conviction of duty, and in the way of obedience) engaging in prayer, may in and by she gift, have his affectious excited, and graces engaged in their proper work; it may be for but let men take heed how they truth unto this method; for there may be little or nothing of the exercise of true grace in all their fervour and fin of affections; but when faith love, holy reverence and gracious delires flir up the gift unto exercise, and call in its allifance. then is the mind in proper order

(4:) It is for when other duties of religion are equally regarded with prayer. He suboft reli-

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gion lies all in prayer and hearing, hath none at all. God hath an equal respect to all other duties, and so must we have: Thus it is expressed, Acts x. 31: respecting the instance of alms; and James placeth all religion herein, because there is none without it. Chap. i. 17. I shall not value his prayers at all, be he never so earnest and frequent in them, who gives not alms according to his ability; and this is required in an especial manner of ministers, that they be not like an hand set up in cross roads, directing others which way to go, but staying behind itself.

So much respecting the spring of spiritual shoughts in prayer, which cannot be altogether unnecessary in a season, when we ought to be very jealous, lest gifts impose themselves in the room of grace, and when the greatest care is requisite that they be employed only to their proper end. I come to a

III. Outward means, or occasion of thoughts about spiritual things, which do not thereby evidence spiritual mindedness; this is religious conversation.

They that fear the Lord, will be speaking one to another of the things in which his glory is concerned: to declare the righteousness, the grace, and the glory of God is the delight of his saints; and accordingly there are some who are ready on all occasions to speak of things spiritual and divine, and it is to be wished there were

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more. All the flagitious fine that abound in the world, are not a greater evidence of the decline of christianity, than this, that it is grown fo unusual, yea a shame for men to speak together of the things of God: It was not fo when religionwas in its primitive power and glory, nor is it fonow with them who really fear God, and arefensible of their duty: there are some who embrace all occasions of spiritual conversation, and those with whom they converse, if they have any spiritual light, cannot but think of the spiritual things that are uttered. Often indeed, the track of mens thoughts is fo contrary to fuch things. that they give them no entertainment; you do but crofs their way with fuch discourse, on which they fland still a little and so pass on; even the countenances of some men will change on the occasion, and they betake themselves to an unfatisfied filence, till they can divert to other things. Some will make fuch replies of empty words, as fully evidence their hearts to be far enough effranged from the things proposed to them: on others, fuch occasional discourse will make impressions, and stir up present thoughts of spiritual things, but these give no evidence that any man is spiritually minded.

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The thoughts of spiritual things, are with many as guests that come into an Inn, and not like children that dwell in the house; they enter occasionally, and there is great ado to provide

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proper entertainment for them; preferrly they depart, and are not looked or enquired after any move; things of another nature are attended to and new occasions bring in new guests for a fraion: But children are owned in the house, are: miffed if they are out of the way, and daily provision is always made for them. So is it with those occasional thoughts about spiritual things ; by one means or other they enter into the mind, and are there entertained for a feafon; on a fudden they depart, and men hear of them no more. But those that are genuine and natural, arifing from a living internal fpring, they dispose the mind to them, and are as the children of a house; they are expected at their places and seafone, and if they are missing they are enquired after; the foul calls itself to account, whence ie is that it hath been fo long without them, and fammons them to its wonted converts and fel-Ministry Comments of the Comme till til til til selven sinne abnables vilkelige gelitsm

CHAP. III.

Of the abounding of Spiritual thoughts, shewing bow far they are an evidence of spiritual mindedness.

TAVING confidered the first particular, requisite to render our thoughts a certain indication of the state of our minds; that they be NATURAL,

by from outward occasions; I tome to the func-

II. Effential characteristic, on evidence that our thoughts proceed from an internal spiritual fountain, which is; "That they abound and " abide in its;" our minds being filled with them.

There is a measure of abounding, which is necesfary to evidence our being spiritually minded: it is the character of all men in the flate of deprayed nature, " that every imagination of the thoughts Af of their hearts is only evil continually." Gen. vi. 4. Some as to the matter of them, fome as to their end, all as to their principle principle principle the evil treasure of the heart can proceed nothing but what is exil a we can therefore bave no eventer evidence of a change in unfrom this flare. than a change wrought in the course of the thoughts; a change herein, is a floory evidence of a bloffed change of flate, and the more the fiream of our thoughts in turned, and our minds are filled with those of a contrary nature, the greater and more firm is our evidence of a translation out of that deprayed flate and conditions

There is nothing to unaccountable as the multiplicity of thoughts in the human minds they fall from men like the leaves of trees, when thaken with the wind, in autumn. To have all the thoughts, all the conceptions that are framed and agitated in the mind, to be evil and that

continually, what an hell of confusion and horror must it needs be? A deliverance from this loathsome hateful state is more to be valued than the whole world; without it neither life, nor peace, nor glory can be attained.

The mighty stream of the evil thoughts of men, will admit of no bounds or dams to put a stop to it; there are but two ways of relief, the one respecting the moral evil of these thoughts, the other their natural abundance: The first by throwing salt into the spring, as Elisha cured the waters of Jeriche; get the mind seasoned with grace, for the tree must be made good, before the fruit will be so. The other is to turn their streams into new channels, fixing them on new objects, so shall we abound in spiritual thoughts; for abound in thoughts we shall, whether we will or no.

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The spiritually minded abound in thoughts of spiritual things; unless we abound in them, spiritual thoughts will not evidence we are of that class; therefore our grand enquiry should be, what measure ought to be assigned; or how to know when we so abound in spiritual thoughts, as that they may be an evidence of our being spiritually minded?

As a general answer, read over among other scriptures the cxix. Psalm, consider what David expresseth there of himself, as to his constant delight in, and continual thoughts of God and his law.

law. Try yourselves by that pattern; examine whether you can truly speak the same words with him, if not in the fame degree of zeal, yet at least with the same sincerity of grace: Wo must be like him in this respect, if ever we intend to reach he heavenly place where he is. Our fouls will be ruined, if when we read in the scripture, how the faints express their experience in faith, love, delight in God and constant meditations on him, while we grant that it was fo with them, we should imagine there is no neceffity that it should be so with us. These things are not written to show what they were, but what we ought to be; all things concerning, them; " were written for our admonition." 1 Cor. x. 11. And if we have not the fame spiritual mindedness in thoughts and meditations of heavenly things, we can have no evidence that we please God as they did, or that we shall go. to that place whither they are ascended. Profession of the life of God and of christianity, passeth with many now at a very low and easy rate; their thoughts are for the most part vain and earthly, their communication unfavoury and corrupt, and their lives at best uneven, fickle and disorderly as to the grand rule of obediencey. yet all is well, all is life and peace. But the holy men of old, who obtained this testimony " that they pleased God," did not so walk before him; they thought of God in the night feafons,

meditated continually in his law, spake of his ways, his works, his praise; their chief delight was in him, and in all things they followed hard after him: And if we answer not this description, it is to be seared we are not at present of them, to whom pertain life and peace. But that we may the better judge of ourselves in this matter, I shall add a few rules to the general direction.

7. Confider, what proportion your thoughts of spiritual things bears with those of other concerns. Our principal interest and concern, according to our profession, lies in things spiritual and eternal. Is it not then folly to suppose, that our thoughts about these, should not hold some proportion with those about other things? rather should they not exceed them? It is not so with men in reference to their families, their studes and occasions of life; It is a truth not only confecrated by the testimony of him who is TRUTH, but evident in the light of reason, what where our treasure is, there will be our "hearts also," Wherefore if our fpiritual treafure be as we profess in spiritual things, (and woe be unto us if it be not) on them will out affections, and confequently our defires and thoughts be principally fixed. All classes of menwould do well to examine, what proportion their thoughts of spiritual things do bear to those about their lawful callings, their relations, children and the like; fetting afide the vain, impertinent. tinent, unprofitable thoughts, which night and day rove up and down, and intrude themfelves in a numberless multitude on the mind. I fear, on fuch an examination, the proportion with the greatest past of professors, will be found to be very small, and with many next to none at all. If it should be asked, whether it be necessary, that men should think as much, and as often about heavenly things, as they do about the lawful affairs of their calling? I fay, more, and oftener, if we are what we profess ourselves to be: by profession we are bound for heaven and glory, but is it any evidence we really delign it, if all, or the greatest part of our thoughts are confumed about the trifles of this world, which we mult speedily leave behind us; and we have only occalional thoughts of the things above. Let a man industriously engaged in the way of his calling try himself by this rule every evening: Let him confider, what have been his thoughts about his earthly concerns, and what about fpiritual, and then alk himlelf, whether he be fpiritually minded or not. Be not deceived, " as " a man thinketh, fo be is:" If the thoughts of heavenly things arising in us, bear no proportion with the other fort, it is an evidence what frame and principle is predominant within; and if we account it a ftrange thing, that our thoughts. should be more exercised about spiritual things. than about the duties of life, we mult not think

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it firange, if when we come to the trial; we cannot find either life or peace,

2. Confider, whether thoughts of spiritual things do constantly take possession of their proper seasons. The most busy men in the world have fome times of thinking, or of retiring unto their own thoughts; but they who are wife, will be at home as much as they can, and have as many feafons for fuch retirements as possible. If that man be foolish who busieth himself so much abroad in other concerns, as that he hath no time to confider the flate of his own family; much more is he, who spends all his thoughts about other things, and never makes use of them in enquiring, how it is with his immortal spirit. But, as just hinted, men can hardly avoid, but that they must have some seasons, partly stated, and partly occasional, wherein they entertain themselves, with their own thoughts :the evening and the morning, times when there is a necessary cessation of all ordinary affairs, as of walking, journeying, and the like, are such feafons.

If we are spiritually minded, if thoughts of spiritual things abound in us, they will with constancy possess these seasons and look upon them, as those which are their due; for they are expressly assigned unto them in the way of rule, both by examples and commands. Deut, vi. 7, Bfal. xvi. 7, 8. & xcii. 2. If these seasons are

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given up to other ends, and occupied with thoughts of another nature, it is an open evidence, that fpiritual things have but little interest in our minds, little prevalency in the conduct of our fouls. It is our duty to afford unto them STATED TIMES taken from other affairs, but if inflead thereof, we rob them of what is their own, to which no other business can lay any just claim, how dwelleth the love of spiritual things in us? Most professors are convinced, it is their duty to pray morning and evening, and Oh that they were all found in the practise of it; but if by the performance of that duty, they judge themselves discharged from any further exercise of spiritual thoughts, they can make no pretence to be spiritually minded. It must be observed, (and it will be found to be true) that if the feafons which are as it were due unto spiritual meditations and exercises, be taken from them; as they will be the worst employed of all the minutes of our lives, fo will they be one day a burthen upon the conscience, more than we can bear: Many will have cause to complain unto eternity, of those leifure times, those precious moments, which might have been improved for their advantage unto eternal bleffedness. If we intend therefore to maintain a title to this grace of spiritual mindedness, if we would have any evidence of it in ourselves; without which we can have none of life or peace, and what we may pretend pretend thereof is but an effect of fecurity, we must preferve the claim and right of spiritual thoughts unto such seasons, and put them in possession of them.

2. Det us confider, how we are affected with our disappointments respecting these seasons. Have we by negligence, by temptations, or by occasional diversions, or the affairs of life, been taken off from thoughts of God, of Christ and of heavenly things, when we ought to have been engaged in them; how are we affected with the review? A carnal mind is well enough fatisfied with the omiffion of any duty, fo it hath the pretence of a necessary occasion; and if it hath loft a temporal advantage, through attendance on fpiritual duty, it will also deeply reflect on itfelf, and perhaps like that duty the worle ever afterwards: But he that is truly spiritually minded, will mourn under a review of fuch omiffions. and by every one of them, is excited to more watchfulness for the future; the foul will say, Alas! how little have I been with Christ this day? how much time hath passed without a thought of him? how foolish was I, to omit fuch and fuch an opportunity? I am deeply in arrears, and can have no reft, until they are discharged.

If we can omit and lose such feasons from time to time, without self reslections and great regret, it is to be seared that we wax worse and worse; way will be made for more omissions, till

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we shall be wholly negligent and unconcerned about them: And indeed that woeful loss of time that is found among many professors, is greatly to be bewailed. Some lose it on themfelves, by a continual track of fruitless impertinent thoughts about their own concerns; fome in vain converse with others, in which for the most part they edify one another but unto vanity. How much of this time might, nay ought to be redeemed for spiritual exercises; the good Lord make all profellors fensible of their loss of former feafons! that they may be the more watchful and affiduous for the future in this great concern of their fouls. Little do fome think, what light, what joy, what readiness for the cross, or for heaven, they might have attained, had they improved all the proper feafons of exercifing their thoughts about spiritual things which they have enjoyed; who now are at a loss in all, and furprized with every fear or difficulty that befalls them.

Thus have I set before you, the first thing that belongs to and characterizes spiritual mindedness; thoughts about spiritual things, springing naturally from a living principle, a spiritual disposition of heart, abounding and abiding in the mind; these are inseparable from, the most undeceiving indication, and the strongest evidence of being spiritually minded.

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greatly to be bewalled. Some late is on them-Shewing the general objects of those thoughts which are evidences of a spiritual mind.

individin convente nearly others, in which for the DEFORE I proceed to the next general head, the foundation of the grace and duty enquired after, some things should be offered and confidered, to render what hath been already fuggested more particularly useful; and there is nothing more necessary and important, than to fee what are, or what ought to be the objects of those thoughts, which, under the qualifications laid down, are the evidences of our being spirisually minded.

This may be useful to many, by helping them to fix their minds, which are too apt to rove into all uncertainty; many are barren in this duty. because they know not what to fix upon, nor how to exercise their thoughts, when they have chosen a subject for meditation; they tire themfelves and faint, not because they are unwilling to'go, but because they cannot find their way, I shall therefore just mention the proper objects of our spiritual thoughts, and afterwards endeawour to help you to a steady contemplation of them.

1. Observe the especial calls of providence, and apply your minds unto thoughts of the feveral duties

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duties required in and by them. There is a voice in all difpensations of providence; a call a cry in every rod of God, in every chaffifing providence; he therein makes a declaration of his name, holine(s and power, and this every wife man will endeavour to difcern, and fo comply with the call. "The voice of the Lord " crieth unto the city, the men of wisdom shall " fee thy name, hear ye the rod and who hath "appointed it." Micah vic 6. Hearken not to any who would give any other interpretation of present providential dispensations in the world. but that they are plain declarations of his difpleasure against the fins of men. Is not his wrath in them, revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men, especially against such as detain the truth in unrighteoulness, or the hypocritical professors of the gospel? Doth he not also fignally declare the uncertainty and instability of all earthly enjoyments, from life itfelf to a shoe latchet? The fingers that appeared writing the doom of Belfhazzar, did it in characters and words that none could read and understand but Daniel; but the present call of God is made plain upon tables, that he may run who readeth it. If the heavens gather blackness with clouds and thunder over us, and those that are journeying will not believe there is a florm a coming, they must bear the severity thereof. How can perions pretend to be epidiquent

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When calamities PUBLIC or PRIVATE take place, this is the time wherein we may have an especial trial whether we be spiritually minded or not; if grace be resident within us, it will exert itself in a diligent search into, and a holy watch over ourselves respecting those things, against which the displeasure of God is declared. It is certainly our duty to search diligently that nothing be found in us, against which God's anger is manifested; no ground of hope respecting our spiritual condition, no sense of our sincerity in any duties, no visible difference between us and others in the world, should divert us from diligence in self-examination.

As we should in such a season take heed of negligence and security, so in compliance with the voice of providence, there should be an humble refignation of ourselves and all our concerns unto the will of God, fitting loofe in our affections from all earthly enjoyments. This we neither do, nor can do, profess what we will; unless our thoughts are much exercised about the reasons of, and motives unto it. Alas! how many at prefent, do openly walk contrary to God herein. The ways, countenances and difcourses of men give evidence hereunto; their love to present things, their contrivances for their increase and continuance, do advance and abound under the calls of God to the contrary. How can persons pretend to be spiritually MINDED,

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MINDED, the current of whose thoughts runs in direct contrariety to the will and dispensations of God! Here lies the ground of their felf-deceit; they are professors of the gospel, they judge themselves believers, they hope they shall be faved, and have many evidences for it: but one negative evidence, will render an hundred that are positive useles; " all these things have I done" faid the young man; " yet one thing thou want-" eft" replied our Saviour; and the want of that one rendered his all things of no avail to him. Many things you have done, many things you do, many grounds of hope abide with you, and neither yourselves nor others do doubt of your condition; but are you spiritually minded? If this one thing be wanting, all the rest will not avail: And what grounds have you to judge that you are so, if your thoughts are directly centrary to the present calls of God? If at such a time when his judgments are in the world, or his voice is in the city and kingdom; if when there are manifest tokens of his displeasure, we slight them, neglect his voice, put it wholly from ourfelves, and continue our love to the world, and our defires after it as before: if the daily contrivance of our minds, be not how to attain a constant refignation of ourselves and our all, unto the will-of God; which cannot be done without much thoughtfulness on the reasons of and ainds do recisio saving D 2 standard :: motives

motives to it; I cannot understand how we can judge ourselves to be spiritually minded.

If any therefore fay, that they would abound more in spiritual thoughts, only they know not what to fix them upon; I propose this in the first place, as that which will lead them to the due performance of present duties, self-examination, and holy resignation of persons, lives, families, all our enjoyments unto the sovereign will and infinite wisdom of God.

2. The special trials and temptations of men, call for the exercise of our thoughts in a peculiar manner. If a man hath bodily pains or distempers, they will cause him to think much of them; at least if he be wife he will do fo, nor will he be always complaining of their smart, but enquire into their causes, and seek their removal: and shall men be more negligent about the spiritual diftempers of the foul; shall they have multiplied temptations, the cause of all spiritual diseases, and take no thought about them? Is it not to be feared, that where it is fo, the temptations are fuch as either in their own nature have deprived them of spiritual sense, or by their deceitfulness are leading on infensibly unto death eternal? Not to have our minds exercised about these things, is to be stupidly secure.

It must be confessed, there is some difficulty, how to exercise our thoughts aright about our temptations; because one great means of their F

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prevalency, is by firring up multiplied thoughts about their objects: The previous power of luft in the affections, will fill the mind with thoughts, and the heart will coin imaginations in compliance therewith; they are the way whereby luft draws away the heart from duty, and entices unto fin; the means at least whereby some men come to have eyes full of adultery, or live in constant contemplation of the pleasures of fin: And thoughts will also arise, by renewed representations of the object of fin, whether it be REAL, as Achan faw the wedge of gold and coveted it; or IMAGINARY, when the imagination being tainted by luft, continually represents the pleasure of fin, and the actings of it unto the mind: When temptations do multiply thoughts about fin, proceeding from either of these causes, or from the fuggestions of the evil one; and the mind hath been used to give them entertainment, that person wants nothing but opportunities and eccasions taking off the power of outward refraints, for the commission of actual sin. It is no way fafe to advise such persons to have many thoughts about their temptations; they will all turn to their difadvantage. ... 1000 diffe something

I now would speak only unto them, whose temptations are an affliction and burden; and such persons, must also be very careful how they suffer their thoughts to be exercised about the matter of their temptation, lest it be a snare, and

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be too hard for them. Men may begin their thoughts of an object with deteffation, and end them in complacency and approbation; the deceitfulness of fin lays hold on something or other, that lust in the mind approves, and focorrupts the whole frame of fpirit which began the duty. There have been instances, of perfons who have fet out with a resolution to punish fin, and have been enfnared by the occasion, unto the commission of the fin they thought to punish: Sin bath a thousand deceitful and destructive arts, and is able to transfuse its poison into the affections, from every thing it hath once made a bait of; especially if it hath already defiled the mind with pleasing contemplations thereof: Wherefore whilst persons are exercised with any temptation. I would not advise them to be conversant in their thoughts about the matter of it; for fometimes the remembrance of former fatisfaction of their luft, fometimes, prefent furprifals, with the fuitableness of it unto unmortified corruption, and fometimes the craft of Satan fixing the imagination on it, will be too hard for them, and carry them to a fresh compliance with that fin, from which they would be delivered.

Think not of the MATTER OF SIN, the things that are in the world, suited unto the lusts of the sless, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, lest ye be more and more entangled; but rather

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rather think much of the ways of relief, exercise your thoughts chiefly about the ways of deliverance from the fnares: Think of the GUILT OF sin, that you may be humbled: Think of the POWER OF SIN, that you may feek ftrength against it. Acquaint yourselves with the great and indeed only way of relief in the feafon of temptation, as it is pointed out Heb. ii. 17. 18. and Chap. iv. 15, 16. The only way for deliverance, is by acting faith in thoughts on Christ, and his power to fuccour them that are tempted: I speak not against promises, resolutions and endeavours, with fuch other ways of escape as are in our own power; they are well in their proper place, but none shall ever be delivered from perplexing temptations, to their own spiritual advantage and the glory of God, but by the exercise of faith on Christ Jesus, and on the fufficiency of his grace for our deliverance. But men not spiritually minded, cannot fix their thoughts on these things, and therefore fome will groan under the conflict between their temptations and convictions; some daily pine away, their temptations get ground upon them, until their breach grow great like the fea, and there be no stopping it; and others betake themfelves unto the pretended relief, that any false religion tenders unto them.

We are all of us liable unto temptations, either fuch as are SXTRAORDINARY, as when riseir

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the hand of God is in them in a peculiar manner for our rebuke; it is true God tempts none, as temptation formally leads unto fin, but he orders temptations fo far as they are chastisements, of these there is no doubt; but any man not judicially hardened, may know both his disease and the remedy: But the ORDINARY temptations with which we are exercised, need diligent attendance for their discovery, as well as for deliverance from them; and it is to be feared, that many abide in darkness all their days, through the power of temptations, yet never know what they are, or wherein they confift; yea some approve themselves in those very things and ways which are their temptations. But in the exercise of due watchfulness, prudence and diligence, men may know the plague of their own heart, the ways by which temptations excite, and the advantages they take of them.

For instance; a minister may have eminent gifts, and be useful and successful in his labours; such an one shall hardly avoid a double temptation, spiritual pride and self-exaltation: Hence the Apostle will not admit a NOVICE (one unexperienced in the deceits of sin, and ways of grace) into the office of the ministry, lest "he "should be listed up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil," I Tim. iii. 6. He himself was not without danger hereof, 2 Cor. xii. 17. The best of men, can hardly fortify their

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their minds against the secret workings of pride, upon applause and success; unless they constantly balance them with thoughts of their teal meanness and unworthiness in the sight of God; and it is well if their acceptance and success above others in the ministry, do not produce remissions in the several duties of the divine life, particularly in that of mortification: All who are ministers, should be careful in these things; for although some of us may not much please others, yet we may so far please ourselves, as to expose our souls to these snares; and the effects of negligence herein, may openly appear unto the great disadvantage of the gospel.

Others are much conversant with the world and its affairs: Now, negligence in spiritual watchfulness, vanity in converse, love of earthly things, and conformity to the world, will upon all occasions impose themselves upon such persons; and if they understand not their temptations, spiritual mindedness will be impaired in them: They that are RICH have their temptations, which for the most part are many, plausible and effectual; and those that are poor have theirs also. The shares of some, lie in their constitutions, of others in their society, of most in the various circumstances of life.

But in these cases, men favoured with the gospel, are not ignorant of the ways of preservation, and means of deliverance; which are (1.) Know

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what are the special temptations by which you suffer, and whereby the life of God is obstructed in you; if this be neglected or disregarded, no man can maintain either life or peace. (2) Know your remedy; many duties are requisite unto this end, but know assuredly, that no one of them, nor all in conjunction will bring relief, without application by faith unto him who is able to succour them that are tempted. Wherefore (3) in this consists your great duty respecting temptations; constantly exercise your thoughts on the love, compassion and care of Christ, with his ability to help and save all them that believe in him.

The same duty is incumbent on us with respect to any urgent general temptation: There are seafons wherein an hour of temptation comes on the earth to try them that dwell therein; and what is a man should judge that now is such an hour, and that the power of darkness is put forth therein? What if he should be persuaded that a general security, coldness and decay in grace, especially as to the actings of zeal, love and delight in God, with an indifference unto holy duties, are the effects of this hour of temptation? If any one do so judge, doubtless 'tis his duty to have his thoughts exercised, how he may escape in this day of trial, and be counted worthy to stand before the son of man.

3. All things in religion, both respecting faith and practice, are to be the objects of our thoughts.

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As they are proposed, or do occur to us, so we ought to give them entertainment in our meditations; to let them slip, or slow from us, as water that is poured into a leaky vessel, is the ruin of many souls. I shall therefore here select one capital instance, but which includes many, of those things, on which the thoughts of the truly spiritually-minded will continually be employed, and in which they will abound.

HEAVEN and the things that are above, eternal things will occupy the thoughts of the spirituallyminded. Herein confids the life of this grace and duty; to mind the things of heaven, and tobe spiritually-minded is all one; or it is the cause of it, as to its growth and degrees, and the evidence thereof in experience. To me, 'tis impossible for to suppose a man to place his chief interest in things above, and not have many thoughts of them; without doubt the generality of chriftians are greatly defective in this duty, partly for want of light into and partly for want of delight in them. Wherever men are, they do not use to neglect thoughts of that country wherein is their inheritance; if they are absent from it for a feafon, yet do they labour to acquaint themselves with its principal concerns: But this heavenly country wherein is our eternal inheritance, is not regarded; men do not exercife themselves as they should in thoughts of thing; eternal and invisible. Indeed most, if not all-D 6

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men live and act under the power of a conviction that there is a state of immortality and glory to come; and with a persuasion hereof they much relieve themselves in their temptations, sufferings and sorrows, though with many tis only a reserve when they can be here no more: But as to a daily contemplation of the nature and blessedness of the upper world, or as to any entrance into it by faith and hope, the greater part are strangers.

However if we are spiritually minded, nothing will be more natural unto us, than to have many thoughts of eternal things, as those which to us are of the greatest concern, as well as excellent and glorious in themselves: The direction is then, that we make heavenly things, the things of the future state, a principal object of our thoughts, and that we meditate much upon them. Without this, all our speculations concerning the nature of eternal things will be of no use to us. 'Tis doubtless the christian's duty to inform and possess his mind with right notions and just apprehensions of things above, and of the state of future glory; and it is by faith only we have a prospect of them, but faith can give us no interest in, unless we have due apprehensions of them. And 'tis to be feared, the greatest part of - mankind do deceive themselves and feed on ashes in this matter; they fancy a future state, which hath no foundation but in their own imagination: wherefore the Apostle directing us to feek and and mind the things that are above, adds, for the guidance of our thoughts, the confideration of the principal concernment of them, "where "Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," Col. iii. 1, 2. He would lead us unto distinct apprehensions of those heavenly things, especially of Christ in his exaltation.

All that have an apprehension of a future state of happiness, agree in this, that it contains, or is accompanied with, a deliverance and freedom from all that is evil; from pain, fickness, forrow, losses, poverty, and all outward troubles, from death itself, and all that leads to it. It is a right and bleffed notion of heaven, that God shall there wipe away all tears from our eyes, or remove from us all causes of forrow; and it would be to our advantage, if we accustomed our minds more to this kind of relief than we do; if upon the incursion of fears, dangers and forrows, we did more readily retreat to thoughts of that flate where we shall be freed from all. But there is that, which to the spiritually-minded, hath more evil in it than all other things put together, and that is SIN: other things, as the lofs of dear relations, or extraordinary pains, may make deeper impressions on the mind, by the natural affections at fome feafons, than ever our fins did in any instance at any one time; as a man may have greater trouble in fense of pain, by a fit of the toothache gone in an hour, than in an heclie fever or confumption, consumption, which will affuredly take away his life: But take in the whole course of life, and all the actings of our souls in spiritual judgment, as well as natural affection; I do not understand how a man can be a true believer, unto whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow and trouble; now heaven is a state of deliverance from sin, a state where we shall be eternally freed from sin, in all its causes, concomitants and effects, and triumph over it for ever.

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This is a notion of heaven that is easily apprehended, and which we may dwell upon to our great satisfaction and advantage; and frequent thoughts and meditation of heaven in this point of view, argue a person to be spiritually-minded; for it is a convincing evidence that sin is a burden, when no thoughts are more welcome unto him, than those of that state in which sin shall be no more. Let such who cannot arise unto fixed thoughts of invisible things in any other branch, dwell on this consideration of them; this the meanest and weakest person, who hath the least spark of sincerity and grace, is capable of apprehending, and able to practise.

As to the positive part of this glorious suture state, the thoughts of men are very various. Many are able to entertain no rational conceptions about a suture state; imagination they have of something that is great and glorious, but what it is they know not; and when their imaginations have

have Auctuated up and down in all uncertainties for a while, they are at last swallowed up in nothing; and whereas what is truly heaven, pleafeth them not, and what doth please them is not heaven, nor there to be found, they feldom or never in good earnest exercise their thoughts about it. So great a part of mankind as the Mabometans. do conceive the state of future blessedness to confift in the full fatisfaction of their fenfual lufts A full evidence that the religion and pleasures. they profess is false: It doth not enlighten their minds to difcern a beauty in spiritual things, nor excite their affections to the love of them, nor free the foul to look after bleffedness in such things, as alone are fuited to its rational conftitution; if it did, they would place their happiness in them: Wherefore it is nothing but an artifice of the god of this world, to blind the eyes of men unto their eternal destruction.

Some of the Philosophers of old, did attain an apprehension that the blessedness of the other world consisted in the soul's full satisfaction in the goodness and beauty of the divine nature; which truth hath been greatly improved by the light of Scripture; and contemplative men have seriously and elegantly illustrated it, in their excellent discourses on what is called the BEATIFIC VISION; whereby they intend, all the ways whereby God in the highest and immediate instances can communicate of himself unto the human

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human foul, and the utmost elevation of its intellectual capacities to receive those communications, giving it the utmost delight and selicity. But still this definition is above the capacities of ordinary christians, and they cannot properly exercise their thoughts upon it; and the truth is, the Scripture gives us another notion of heaven and glory, not contrary to nor inconsistent with the former, but more suited to the faith and experience of believers; and which alone can convey a true and useful sense of these things unto the mind, and therefore should be inquired into, and firmly stated in our thoughts and affections.

The principal notion which the Scripture gives us of the state of heavenly blessedness, and which the meanest christian is capable of improving in his daily practice, is, that faith shall be turned into Wherefore this is the fight, and grace into glory. difference between our present and our future flate; fight hereafter shall supply the room of faith; and if fo, then the object of that fight must be the same with the present object of our faith. What then is the principal present object of faith, as it is evangelical, in whose room fight fucceeds? Is it not " the manifestation of the e glory of the infinite wildom, grace, love and es power of God in Christ; the revelation of the " eternal counsels of his will, and the ways of " their accomplishment unto the eternal falvaet tion of the church in and by him; with the " glorious

" glorious exaltation of Christ himself." Therefore in the full fatisfactory representation of these things unto the foul, received by fight, or a direct immediate intuition of them, doth the glory of heaven principally confift; we behold them now darkly as in a glass, that is the utmost to which by faith we can attain, but in heaven they shall be openly and fully display'd. The infinite incomprehensible excellencies of the divine nature, are not proposed in Scripture as the immediate object of our faith here, nor shall they be so unto our fight in heaven: As the manifestation of them in Christ, is the immediate object of faith, fo will it be of fight; only through this manifestation of them we are led even by faith ultimately to acquiefee in, as we shall in heaven be led by love perfectly to adhere unto them, with delight ineffable : This is our immediate objective glory in heaven, we hope for no other.

Some perhaps will be ready to fay, "that if "this be heaven they can fee no great glory in it, no such beauty, as for which it should be desired." It may be so; for some have no instrument with which to take a view of invisible things, but carnal imaginations; some have no light, no principle, no disposition of soul, to which these things are either acceptable or suitable; and some will go no farther in the consideration of them, than their reason will guide; but we look for no other heaven, we defire none but what

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what we are led unto, and prepared for, by the light of the Gospel; that which shall perfect all the beginnings of divine grace in us: We value not that heaven which is equally fuited to the defires and inclinations of the worst of men, as well as of the best; for we know that they who like not grace here, neither do nor can like that which is glory hereafter. The glory of heaven, for which the Gospel prepares us, to which faith leads and conducts us, and after which the fouls of believers long, is the full, open, perfect manifestation of the glory of the wisdom and love of God in Christ, in his person and mediation; with the revelation of all his counfels concerning them, and the communication of their effects unto us: The effects produced by them in our fouls now, are the first fruits of glory: He unto whom this is not defirable, may betake himfelf unto Mahomet's paradife, or the Philosopher's speculations; in the gospel heaven he hath no interest. " that be between they can, for

There are fundry other things that belong unto this state of glory; but what hath been mentioned is the fountain and spring of all: God's communications of himself unto us, and our enjoyment of him, shall be in and by the manifestation of his glory in Christ: But all the objective glory in heaven, would not make us blessed and happy, if it were possible to behold and enjoy it, if our natures were not also made perfects.

fect, freed from all diforder, irregular motions, and imperfect operations; and what is it that must give our nature this subjective perfection? It is that grace alone, of the beginnings of which, we are here made partakers. Herein confifts the renovation of the image of God in us; and the perfect communication of that image unto us, is the absolute perfection of our natures, the utmost to which their capacity is fuited; and by the fledfast adherence of our whole fouls unto God. in perfect love and delight, we eternally abide in, that happy state, a no nest y both the against bon

This is that notion of heaven, with which those who are spiritually-minded ought to be conversant; and the true stating it by faith, is a difcriminating character of believers: The persons who have not an experience of the excellency of these things in their initial flate in this world, and their incomparable transcendency unto all other. things, cannot conceive how heavenly bleffedness. should consist in them; unskilful men may cast away rough unwrought diamonds as useless stones, not knowing to what, a polishing will bring them; fo men unskilful in the mysteries of godliness, do not conceive there can be any glory in rough unwrought grace, in the beginnings and exertions of it here, ignorant of that luftre and beauty which the polishing of the heavenly hand will give unto it. It forester our bee mentaling but

antiquoris.

· But it is not sufficient merely to have right apprehensions of heavenly things; 'tis the christian's duty to think often on them, and frequently to contemplate his own concernment in them; without this all our speculations concerning the nature of heaven and eternal things, will be of no use unto us: This is the great evidence of our having a real interest in the things above; the great trial whether we are spiritually-minded or not: Are they our treasure, our portion, our reward, in comparison of which all other things are but loss and dung? affuredly then our minds will be very conversant with them: It cannot be imagined that a man should have in him a principle suited unto things above, and of the fame kind and nature with them, and that his foul should be under the influence and conduct of those graces, which Arive and naturally tend to perfection; and yet not have his thoughts greatly exercised about heaven, and the things at Christ's right hand. Not to abound in contemplation of them, argues, whatever men may profess, they are earthly and carnal Build How smiththe & pater or bris cond to

I must add, the spiritually-minded in their thoughts and meditations of the glory of heaven and eternal things, do lay them in the balance against all the sufferings of this life; and thus they are ever ready to meet them with courage and resolution, and are resigned if not chearful under them: When the mind is filled with the thoughts

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thoughts of the unseen glories of eternity, it hath in readiness, that which will sustain and comfort it under the lofs of name, reputation. goods, liberty and life itself; and which more than counterbalances also the longest duration of fufferings, which at their utmost extent, in comparison are but for a moment. And as heaven is contrasted with the fufferings of this life, in the thoughts of the spiritually-minded, so they often compare it with the opposite state of eternal mifery: Few men care to think much of hell, and the everlasting torments of the wicked therein: those do so the least, who are in most danger of becoming a prey to them. They put far from them the evil day, and suppose their covenant with death and hell to be fure; some begin to persuade themselves, that there is no such place, because 'tis their interest and desire, that there should be none; others are so profane as to make a scoff at it, as though a future judgment was but a fable; and most feem to think, that there is a feverity in thoughts about it, which may well be spared: transient thoughts they will have of it, but will not fuffer them to abide in their minds, left they should be too much discomposed and terrified: and they would fain flatter themselves, 'tis not confistent with the goodness of Christ to leave any of the human race in that condition; not reflecting that there is more spoken directly of hell, its torments and their eternity by HIMSELF. than CHA

than in all the Scripture belides. These thoughts generally proceed from mens unwillingness to be troubled in their fins; but is it not the height of folly to endeavour the hiding of themselves for a few moments, from that which is unavoidably coming upon them unto eternity; the due confideration of which is a great means for an escape from it. The spiritually-minded will have their thoughts conversant about the future state of eternal mifery; they will consider it as what they were by nature obnoxious unto, as what they deserved by their personal sins, as what they were delivered from by Jefus the Saviour, and as a firong expression of the indignation of God against fin; which thoughts will naturally produce fresh resentment against that evil thing which God hates, and will cherish humility, felfabasement, and admiration of divine grace. This therefore is our necessary duty, 'tis required of us, that in our thoughts and meditations, we compare the state of blessedness as a free and absolute effect of the grace of God in and through Christ Tefus, with that state of eternal misery we had deserved: And if there be any spark of grace, or of gratitude in our hearts, it will be flirred up to due exercise.

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Directing to the particular objects of spiritual thoughts, in beaven.

HAVING attained right notions of the glory of the heavenly state, it will be greatly to our advantage to fix on some particulars belonging to it, as the special objects of our thoughts. As

I. Think much of him, who unto christians is the life and center of all the glory of heaven, Christ himself. The whole glory of the bleffed state is expressed, by "being ever with the "Lord, where he is, to behold his glory." In and through him is the beatistic manifestation of God and his glory made; and through him are all communications of inward glory unto us: The present resplendency of heavenly glory consists in his mediatory ministry, and he will be the medium of all-glorious communications between God and the church unto eternity: Wherefore the spiritually-minded cannot but six their thoughts on Christ above, as the center of heavenly glory.

By faith they have continual recourse to him, on account of what he did and suffered for them in this world, and this proceeds from a sense of their own wants; for on what he was, and did on earth, do depend pardon of sins, justification,

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and peace with God. But love of him is no less necessary to us than faith in him; and although we have powerful motives unto love, from his gracious acts on our behalf when manifest in sless, yet the formal reason of our adherence unto him, is what he is in himself, as now exalted in heaven: If the thoughts of his present glory be not frequently with, and also refreshing unto us, how dwelleth his love in us?

Again, is it not our hope that ere long we shall be ever with him? If so, it is certainly our wisdom and duty to be with him here as much as we can. It is a vain thing for any to suppose, that they place their chief happiness in being for ever with Christ, who care not to be with him here; and the only way of our being present with him on earth, is by faith and love exerting themselves in spiritual thoughts and affections. How abfurd for men to esteem themselves christians, who scarce think of Christ all the day long; and yet how many who scarce ever think of him, but when they swear by his name. But on the other hand, I have read of some who have lived and died in continual contemplation of him, fo far as the imperfection of the present state would admit; and I have known, and do know some who call themselves to account, reprove and cenfure themselves, if at any time he hath been many minutes out of their thoughts; and it is strange it should be otherwise, with all them who love who give full evidence, that it is a rate thing for them to be exercised in serious thoughts and meditations about him. They will speak of God, of mercy, of pardon, and of his power and goodness; but mention Christ unto them, with any thing of faith and love and trust in him, these are as strange things; the things of the wisdom and power of God in Christ, are soblishness unto them.

But no man can be a christian unless his thoughts are much on and with Christ; this duty or exercise lies at the foundation of all communion between Christ and the fouls which believe in him: To be a christian supposes a continued thoughtfulness of Christ; but we should be careful that our thoughts of him are conceived, and directed according to the rules prescribed in the facred oracles, left we deceive our own fouls. give up the conduct of our affections to vain imaginations, and render all our devotion an abomination. For want of adhering to this rule, the power of religion was at first ruined, and superstition introduced and established: Men were convinced that they must think much of Christ, and supposed that this would make them conformable to him; but their minds being carnal, deflicate of evangelical faith, and of the wifdom of faith to exercise their thoughts and affections in a due manner, according to Scripture, they gave them-

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felves up to many foolish imaginations and inventions, by which they thought to express their love and conformity to him: They would have images of him, which they embraced, adored and bedewed with their tears; they would have cruofixes, as they called them, which they carried about with them, and wore next their hearts, as if they resolved to lodge Christ always in their bosoms; they would go in pilgrimage to the place where he died, through a thousand dangers; and purchase a seigned chip of the tree on which he fuffered, at the price of all they had in the world; they would endeavour by long thoughtfulnels, fasting and watchings, to cast their fouls into extalies and raptures, in which they fancied him corporally present with them; and they came at last to make themselves like him, in getting impressions of wounds on their sides; hands and feet. Unto all these things, and sundry others of like nature and tendency, did superstition abuse and corrupt the minds of men, and doth still, under a pretence of a principle of truth.

But we are not to flight and neglect our duty, because other men have been and are mistaken in theirs; nor are we to part with practical fundamental principles of religion, because they have been abused by superstition: We see indeed how dangerous it is to depart from the conduct of Scripture light and rule; but there is no Gospel truth

conflantly to meditate on Christ, by the actings of faith in their thoughts and affections. God hath both shewed us the necessity of this duty, and hath prescribed the ways and means whereby we may perform it: Would you think of Christ as you ought; pray that the Holy Spirit may abide with you continually, to excite and quicken your thoughts of Christ, it belongs to his office; and that your thoughts may be fixed, treasure up in your memories and hearts those passages of Scripture which have respect to his person, offices and grace.

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The advantages of this thoughtfulness and contemplation, are obvious; no thoughts of Christ, proceeding from faith and accompanied with love, shall be lost; they that sow this feed shall return with their sheaves : Christ will meet them with gracious intimations of his acceptance of and delight in them, and will return a fense of his own love unto them: He never was, he never will be, behind or deficient in returns of love. Our thoughts of Christ, as they are exceeding acceptable unto him, fo they are the best pledges of our cordial affection; and let it be remembered, they are the only means whereby we comply with the gracious intimations of his love; and the chief way in which our fouls are prepared and become meet for the reception and entertainment of him: Our want of communion with with Christ, or the experience of it, ariseth principally from our defect in this exercise; to slight it, is not the way to have our joys abound: God hath taught many, that the sweetness, life and power of religion, and the manifestations of his love and the grace of Christ, are to be experienced and rejoiced in, only or chiefly by constant thoughtfulness and meditations on Christ.

The glory of his presence, as God and Man united for ever; the discharge of his mediatorial office at the right hand of God; the glory of his present acts for the church; the love, power and efficacy of his intercession, by which he secures the salvation of his people; and the approach and consequences of his glorious coming unto judgment, are to be the objects of our daily thoughts and meditations; with constancy and delight will our minds be exercised about the things which are above, especially Christ himself, if we are his disciples indeed.

II. The second especial object of the spiritually minded, and on which their thoughts will constantly be exercised, is God. He is the sountain whence all spiritual things proceed, and the ocean in which they issue: He is their center and circumference wherein they all begin, meet and end. Thus the Apostle, Rom. xi. 36. "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever." All things arise from his power, and are all disposed by

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by his wisdom, with a tendency to his glory; under this consideration alone, as they come from, and tend unto him, are they to be the objects of our spiritual meditations: God is all in all; he therefore is, or ought to be, the supreme absolute object of our thoughts and desires; and where our thoughts do not either immediately and directly, or mediately and by just consequence tend to, and end in him, they are not spiritual.

But oh! how many of mankind are thereeven in christian states, to whom it may be faid, God is not in all their thoughts: Indeed of this want of thoughts of God there are many degrees, for all the wicked are not equally forgetful of him. 1. Some are under the power of atheiftical thoughts; they deny, or question the very Being of a God. This is the height of what the enmity of the carnal mind can rife unto; to acknowledge God, and yet refuse to be subject to his holy will, may be thought as bad, yea worfe, than to deny his Being; but it is not: THAT is a rebellion against his authority, but THIS, an hatred unto the only fountain of all goodness, truth and being: If they own his Being, they must acknowledge him infinitely righteous, holy and powerful, which would destroy all their defires and fecurity. The great reason why menboth question the Being of God, and despise his providence, is their reliffance to the light and E 3 power.

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power of christianity: It is the fullest revelation God ever made; it is the last he ever will make in this world. If this be despised, if men rebel against its light, break its cords, and are fenfeless of its power, nothing can preferve them from the highest atheism, that human nature is capable of; it is in vain to expect relief or prefervation from inferior means, where the highest and noblest is rejected. Reason, or the light of nature, gives evidences to the being of a God, and arguments are well pleaded from them to the confusion of atheists; arguments sufficient to retain men in an acknowledgment of the divine power and godhead, who had no other, no higher evidences of them; but as God hath designed to magnify his word, above all his name, or above all other ways of the revelation of himfelf unto the world, he will not give the honour unto the light of nature; reason shall not have the same efficacy on the minds of those who reject the light and power of divine revelation, as it hath, or may have, on shem whose best guide it is; and therefore oftentimes there is more common honesty among civilized Heathens and Turks, than among degenerate Christians: And from the same reason, the children of professors are sometimes irrecoverably profligate. Persons who fall off from all subjection of mind to the Gospel, either notionally or practically, are a thousand times more disposed unto downright atheism, than such who never enjoyed

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enjoyed the light of the Gospel: Contempt of the Gospel, begets in, and leaves on the mind, such a depraved corrupt habit, that it cannot but be strongly inclined to all evil. The best things, when corrupted, yield the worst savour. Whatever ground the Gospel loseth in the soul, sin possessed for itself; and as the love and practice of sin, makes it the interest of some that there should be no God to call them to an account, so they say to atheism, which alone pretends to give them security: But none can have the least inclination or temptation to be atheists, until they have rejected the Gospel, which immediately exposes them to the worst of evils.

2. There are those of whom also it may be faid, that God is not in all their thoughts, though they acknowledge his Being. They are not practically influenced in any thing by the notions they have of him. " They profess that they " know God, but in their works deny him, be-" ing abominable and disobedient, and to every " good work teprobate." How many in our day, who think, who act in all things, as if there was no God, at least as if they never thought of him with fear and reverence! We need not feek far for evidences of mens difregard to God; the pride of their countenances testify against them. Oaths, licentiquiness of life, and contempt of all that is good, evidence and confirm it. Such as thefe, however, may own God in words, may be afraid of him in dangers, and may attend outwardly on his worthip; but they think not of God at all in a proper manner, he is not in all their thoughts.

3: There are yet less degrees of this forgetfulness of God: Some are so filled with thoughts of the world, and the concerns of life, that it is impossible they should think of God as they ought: As the love of God, and the love of the world, in prevalent degrees, are inconfiftent; fo thoughts of God, and of the world, in the like degree, are inconfiftent; yet this is the flate of many, who would notwithstanding be esteemed spiritually-minded. Love and defire of earthly things, exhaust the vigour of their spirits all the day long; and in the midft of a multitude of worldly thoughts, with heads and hearts full of them, many engage in holy duties, and thefe times must suffice for thoughts of God. But notwithstanding these duties, through the want of a due preparation for them, through the fulnels of their minds with other things, and throthe absence of grace in them, it may be said companatively, that God is not in all their thoughts.

I pray God that this (at least as to some degrees thereof) be not the condition of many among us. Setting aside those who openly live in sin, who are profane in their principles, and profligate in their lives: What shall we think of some who are sober in life, industrious in their callings,

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callings, and not negligene in the external duties of religion; fuch as these are apt to approve themselves, and others are engaged to speak well of them; but if they are traced home, it will be found respecting many, that God is not in all their thoughts as he ought to be: Their earthly conversation, defigns and pursuits, do all manifest that the vigour of their spirits, their whole hearts are engaged in things below ; a few transient thoughts are sometimes cast away upon God, which he must despise,

4. Persons cherishing secret lusts in their hearts or lives, cannot be faid to have God properly in their thoughts. Such perfore no doubt there are: God is much in their words, but not duly in their thoughts; they flatter themfelves. for a feafon, but prefently fome hateful or hurtful lust discovers itself to be predominant in them: One is drunken, another unclean, a third an extortioner; giving scandal hereby to the world. and bringing themselves under a most dreadful woe; but we must bear the reproach, as the Apostles of Christ and others did of old, committing the iffue of all things unto the care of heaven: However, it is good in fuch a feafon, tobe jealous over ourselves and others, and to exhort one another daily, whilst it is called to-day, left any be hardened thro' the deceitfulness of fin. The persons here described, cannot be spiritually. minded; but I would just premise, that God for E 5

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his own glory may fuffer a luft or corruption to break loofe in some that are; but then we must diffinguish between a time of temptation in some, and the ordinary flate of the mind in others: A buft or corruption flarting up, or breaking forth in conjunction with a violent temptation, is the continual burden and grief of the foul that is spiritually-minded, and it will be ever conflicting with and contending against it; but with them in whom any fin is ordinarily prevalent, it is otherwise; their trouble, if they have any on this account, respects principally, if not solely, its guilt and effects, otherwise they like the lust well enough, and are not willing to part with it: These are far enough from being spirituallyminded, and none can be fo, unless they have many thoughts of God, as concerning what he is in himself, and what he will be unto them, and do also take delight in such thoughts and meditations() vision laboral garrie grandentica

God will be much in the thoughts of the spi-

(1.) As to his Being and Existence. In this is the foundation of all our relation and access to him; "he that cometh to God must believe that he is;" this is the first object of faith, and it is the first act of reason; and being the sole foundation of all religion, it is our duty to exercise multiplied thoughts about it, and to renew them on all occasions. As our knowledge of the divine

divine Being (as to its foundation) is laid in the light of nature, the operation of conscience, and the due exercise of reason about the works and effects of infinite power and wisdom; so it ought to be increased and rendered useful, by faith in divine revelation; and the experience of a facred, energy through it: By this faith we ought to let in frequent thoughts of the being and existence of God; and this duty is peculiarly necessary in our day, from the abounding of atheism both notional and practical, and from the unaccountable confusions and divisions that there are in the world. Never had profane and profligate mengreater outward appearance to strengthen them. in their infidelity and atheifm; nor those that are godly greater trials for their faith, with respect to the visible state of things. Without a frequent retreat to the contemplation of God's Being. there is no relief, nor refreshment to be had under the evil principles and atheistical impieties which abound among us; and in fuch a featon as this, the spiritually-minded will much exercise their thoughts on the existence of God; they will continually fay within themselves, " Verily " there is a reward for the righteous, verily " he is a God who judgeth in the earth." Hence will follow fuch apprehensions of the immensity of his nature, and of his infinite wildom, eternal power, and absolute sovereignty, as will hold E. 6. their

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their fouls firm and fledfast, in the highest storms

If thoughts should arise that there is no God, which nature itself startles at, the spirituallyminded will retreat, as is the best way, to his own experience; he hath a witness in himself. a spiritual sense and experience of eternal power and godhead, as also of all those other perfecfions of God which he is pleased to manifest by Tellis Christ. He therefore will treat the fuggellion, " that there is no God," like him of old, who, when a cunning fophister would prove to him by fyllogifme, that there was no fuch thing as motion, gave no answer unto his arguments, but role up and walked. How often have I had experience of the power and prefence of God in prayer! will the real Christian fay. How ollen hath he exerted his power and grace refpecting me by his spirit and his word, with an inchilible evidence of his being, goodness and love? How often hath conscience been refreshed with a lenfe of the pardon of fins, and in speaking that peace to my foul, which all the world sould not communicate unto me? In how many afflictions, troubles and dangers, bath he been a prefent help and relief? What fenfible emanations of life and power from him, have I obtained in meditation on his grace and glory? And whatever be in this suggestion, one thing I know full well, that whereas I was dead, I am alive:

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whereas I was blind, now I fee; and that by an effect of divine power. The fhield of faith, managed by the hand of experience, will quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and a recalling the experiences we have had of God, will lead us to the exercise of all kind of graces,

Should we find ourselves lost, or as it were overwhelmed in our thoughts of the divine Being, which is no wonder from the greatness and glory of the object; we shall do well to betake ourselves to an holy admiration of what we cannot comprehend: Enquiries and reasonings will puzzle and disquiet us; infinite glory forbids us any near approach, and that only by faith: The foul therefore should bow itself down to God's adorable greatness and incomprehenfible perfections, and divert its thoughts to the effects of his being and attributes! Our thoughts concerning the being of God, before whom all the nations and inhabitants of the world are as the dust of the balance, and as vanity, can iffue in nothing but holy admiration; but then what is too great and high for us in itself, is made suitable to our understandings in its effects: "The invisible " things of God are known in and by the things " that are feen;" these we may consider, and inthe streams taste of the fountain which at present we cannot approach.

2. With thoughts of the being of God, those of his omnipresence and omniscience continually octoda

cupy the breafts of the spiritually-minded. We cannot take one step in a walk before him, unless we remember, that always, and in all places. he is present with us; and that the frame of the heart, and our inward thoughts, are ever in his view, no less than our outward actions. Butalas! in how few is there this fure evidence of being spiritually-minded? Pretence of business. engagements in trade, carnal relations, and the common course of communication in the world. with a supposition that all forts of society are allowed for diversion, have fullied the beauty of Gospel conversation, and cast out the remembrance of God from the minds of most, even at feafons when men cannot be preserved from fin without it.

To some, company constitutes such a season; therefore let those, who with a careless boldness do put themselves among such persons, as they know have been temptations and occasions of fin anto them; yea let all who enter promiscuously into all focieties and companies, know afferedly, that if they awe not their hearts continually with the apprehensions of God as always with them, and his eye always upon them, they will not be preferved from fnares and finful miscarriages: Thoughts of the omniprefence and omniscience of God, should be ever present with those who chuse, or are cast on societies of irreligious perfens; indeed as for the former, no wonder if they

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they forget all regard to God, and it is just with God to leave them to all the evils that naturally and generally do ensue: And such thoughts are needful also to the best of us, and in the best of human societies, that we behave not amis at any time.

To others, privacy with opportunity is an occasion of temptation and fin, and by this many a good beginning hath been utterly ruined : Gurfed fruits proceed every day from this occasion, as well as from light and finful company : A concurrence of fecrefy and opportunity, as it hath produced many shameful things, so it is a most proper feafon for thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, and none will be want ing in some measure in them, if spirituallyminded. One thought of the actual prefence of the holy God, and the open view of his all-feeing eye, is sufficient to lay in the balance against any temptation springing out of secrely and opportunity: A speedy retreat hereto, upon the first finful thought with which temptation may affault the foul, will be its strong tower, and where it shall be fafe.

Another season for exercising the mind in thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, is in our folitudes and retirements. These afford the most genuine evidences whether we are spiritually-minded or not: What we are in them, that we are; and no more: Whatever is stored.

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stored up in the affections and memory, will at such a time offer itself for our present entertainment; and where men have accustomed themselves to any things whatsoever, they will present them for the possession of their thoughts: The Psalmist shews us the way to prevent this evil; Ps. xvi. 7, 8. "I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel, my reins also instruct me in the night season; I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand." Continual apprehensions of the presence of God with him, kept his mind and affections in that awe and reverence of him, as that they gave him counsel in all such seasons, and instructed him in his duty.

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Another feafon calling for the fame duty, are times of great difficulties and dangers. Suppose a man is left alone in his trials for the profession of the Gospel; suppose him brought before Judges and Rulers who are filled with rage, and anmed with power against him, and all things are disposed to affect him with dread and terror : It is the duty of fuch a person to call off his thoughts. from all things visibly present, and to fix them on the completence and omnifcience of God: He fits among those judges though they acknow? ledge him not, and rules over them at his pleas fure. Thoughts of the presence and power of God, gave the Old Teffament Saints not only comfort and support under their distress, when t death they

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en øy they were alone and helples, but courage and resolution to defy their enemies; witness those holy fouls that withfood Nebuchadnezzar, and braved his burning furnace. And when the Apostle Paul was brought before Nero, that monster of cruelty, and all men forfook him, he affirms, " that the Lord stood by him and " flrengthened him." He refreshed himself with thoughts of his presence, and had the bleffed fruit thereof. Herein also did the holy Martyrs triumph, and even despised their bloody perfecutors; and our Saviour himself made it the ground of his support on the like occasion, John xvi. 32. " Behold the hour cometh, yea is now " come, that ye shall be scattered every one to " his own, and leave me alone, and yet I am " not alone, because the Father is with me." Did christians but possess their souls with this apprehension in their trials and dangers, that indeed they are not alone, because their father God is with them; did they on these occasions (when all things are full of perplexity and terror) what is their wisdom and duty to do; even abstract and take off their thoughts from all outward and prefent appearances, and fix them on the presence of God; the scene of things would be greatly: changed in their minds, despondency would flee away, and they would find all that appears against them to be nothing but weakness, folly and va-Mana Cod din Mark nity, while on their fide, are infinite wildom and almighty power.

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Scasons of providential warnings call also for thoughts of God's omnipresence and omniscience. We have frequently such warnings; sometimes in the things which are esteemed accidental, from which ourselves may have been strangley delivered; sometimes in the things which we see do befal others by thunder and lightning, or by violent storms: All the works of God, especially those that are rare or uncommon, have a voice which speaks unto us; and the first thing suggested to a spiritual mind in such seasons, will be, God is in this place,

3. The spiritually-minded have frequent thoughts also of God's omnipotence, or almighty power. Probably, most men suppose they need not much exhortation to this; for who doth not grant it on all occasions? But though it is in general granted, as eternal power is inseparable from the first notion of the Divine Being, yet few believe it for themselves, and as they ought. To believe the almighty power of God, with reference to our persons, and all our concerns temporal and eternal, is in fact one of the highest and noblest acts of faith, and which includes in it all others. It is that which God at first proposed alone as the proper object of our faith, on entrance into covenant with him, Gen. xvii. r. " I am God almighty;" but it is that in which God God fees 'tis necessary for him frequently to in-

It is utterly impossible we should walk before God to his glory, or with any real peace or comfort respecting ourselves, unless our minds are continually exercised with thoughts of his almighty power. Every thing that befals us, every thing that we hear of, in which is the least danger, will discompose our minds, and make us tremble like the leaves of the forest shaken with the wind; or make us sly to foolish or finful realief, unless we are firmly established in the father hereof.

If we confider the promifes of God unto his church, as yet unaccomplished, and take a view of the present state of the church in the world. in all the fears, dangers and evils to which it is exposed, we shall quickly find, that unless this sheet-anchor be well fixed, we shall be toffed up and down, and exposed to most violent temptations. Take one instance, which is the common concern of all men, unless of those who live and die like beafts, and who are under the power of horrible presumption, without any due thoughts of their future and eternal state. We are obnoxious to death every moment, which will lay our bodies in the dust; and from whence they will have no more disposition or power in them, selves to rife again, than any other part of the mould of the earth: Their recovery must be an act

act of almighty power; now what comfort, what fatisfaction can any man have in his life, on which his all depends, and which is passing from him every moment, unless he hath continual thoughts of the mighty power of God, whereby he is able to receive his departing foul into the invisible world, and to raise his body out of the dust, and invest it with life eternal.

Not to infift on more particulars: Thus it is with them who are spiritually-minded, and thus it must be with us, if we pretend a title to that privilege, or would class among them. They are filled with thoughts of God, in opposition to that character of wicked men, that God is not in all their thoughts: They have regard to his divine attributes, and to all the diftinguishing relations he hath taken on himself towards them, with all the effects of his covenant in Christ Jesus; and they not only think much of God, but they take delight in these thoughts, they are fweet unto them; they rejoice at the remembrance of what he is, and what he will be unto them, and they have no folid joy but in thoughts. of God; to which therefore they continually retreat, and in which they find relief and comfort against all that they feel or fear.

The advantages we receive thereby, are innumerable; our faith as to invisible things, and out trust in God, will be greatly increased and strengthened thereby: It will give life and exer-

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of hope, are God in Christ and eternal glory: This alone also will make us ready for the cross, for all souts of sufferings; and we shall acquire an holy resignating of our persons, lives, families, and all our enjoyments, to the wisdom and sovereign will of God: And this exercise of the thoughts is likewise the most effectual means to weam the hearts and affections from things on earth, and to prepare the soul for the fight of God, and enjoyments of heaven.

But notwithstanding the many motives we have to this duty of fixing our thoughts on God and heavenly things, and the unfpeakable advantages which are connected with it; is it not to be feared, that many of us, when weighed in the balance of God's word, will be found too light. To be spiritually-minded, is not merely an abstinence from outward fins, and performing external duties, though with diligence and constancy; all this may be done on such principles, and for fuch ends, and with fuch a frame of heart, as to find no acceptance with God! Our hearts he requireth, and we can no way give them unto him, but by our affections, and abounding in holy thoughts of him with delight. Let no man deceive himself; unless he thus abounds in thoughts of thefe particular objects, unless his meditation of God and his attributes be fweet unto him, all that he pretends to, and places

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places his hope in, will fail him in the day of

But as there are, or may be, some christians, who through a consciousness of their deficiency in the discharge of this part of the duty of spiritual-mindedness, may fall under many discouragements and sears; it becomes the minister to sollow him "who will not quench the smoaking fax, nor break the bruised reed;" and therefore I shall attempt to offer something for the relief and comfort of those that are sincere, but sorrowful under a sense of their weakness.

CHAP. VI.

Containing directions to those that complain of instability of spiritual thoughts; and some rules for attaining and establishing, a holy frame of mind.

I Thath been the complaint of many, that among all the branches of their duty to God, there is not one in which they are more at a loss, than this "fixing and exercising their thoughts" on things spiritual and heavenly." They often attempt it (knowing it to be their duty, and being persuaded of its excellency) but their minds are unsteady, their abilities are small, their invention barren, their memories frail, and their judgments weak, unable to dispose of things into a proper order; they know not what to think upon

apon for the most part, and when they fix on any thing, they are immediately at a loss, cannot make any progress, and so give over. Hence other thoughts, or thoughts of other things, take advantage to impose themselves on them, and what began in spiritual meditation, ends in carnal vanity: On these accounts, some are often discouraged to enter on the duty; and many give it over as soon as it is begun, ashamed both of it and themselves. Unto such as are really concerned in these things, whose desiciency in the duty is a burden, who mourn under and desire to be freed from it; I would offer the following particulars.

1. As our defect in this part of our duty to God, proves the vanity of the mind, so the confideration thereof, should bumble and abase us. Whence is it that we cannot abide in contemplation of spiritual things? Is it because they are things in which we have no concern? or are they so worthless and unprofitable, that it is to no purpose to spend our thoughts about them? Rather, are they not of all things most worthy, useful; desirable; and compared with which, all other things are but loss and dung. Or is it thus with us in this duty, because the faculties and powers of our fouls were not originally fuited to the contemplation of things divine and heavenly? Far be it; the foul was created of God for this very end, fitted with inclinations to abide with him him in all things without diffaffe, without wear! ness: Nothing was more natural, easy and pleafant unto the foul, than fleadines in the contemplation of God and his works, The cause then of all this evil lies at our own door; this, together with other evils, came upon us by the entrance of fin; hereby our minds were wholly turned off from God, and centered in things vain, fenfual and wicked: By grace our minds are renewed, or changed and delivered from this frame and disposition, but this only partially; the principle of vanity is no longer predominant, to alienate us from the life of God, or to keep us in enmity against him; the renewed do not walk in the vanity of their minds as do others, but yet such a wound, such a weakness remains, as both weakens and hinders them in most, if not all, the operations of spiritual life. They who have made any progress in grace, are fenfible of their vanity; it is the greatest burden of their fonls, and they groan after fo complete a renovation of the mind, as thereby they might be perfectly freed from that which often defeats them in their deligns to meditate on heavenly things, frustrates their best resolutions, and impoles on them thoughts of fuch things, as from their nature or consequences, they utterly abhor. It is this internal vanity of mind that endeavours to betray us, and to weaken our graces, or to hinder their due operations; and it strives also to

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open the doors of the heart, to our greatest enemies; if our chief aim therefore be not to difcover, suppress, and destroy this traitor, we shall not succeed in the spiritual warfare.

But this being the original cause of all that inability of mind, whereof you complain; cultivate HUMILITY in the inward thought, and walk under a fense of the remains of this vanity of mind: Thus wholefome fruits may be gal thered from this bitter root, and meat may come out of the eater. If, when we cannot abide in holy thoughts of God, and our relation to him, we reflect on this cause of it, to our further humiliation and felf-abasement; our good defigns and purposes are not lost: Such thoughts may be as uleful as those we first defigned. It should be observed, that unchangeable cleaving unto God, in all the powers and affections of our minds is referved for heaven; but though we cannot attain perfection in this matter, yet greater del grees may be attained; fuch, as I fear few have experience of, but which is our duty to be continually prefling after. If we are wife, we shall endeayour fuch a cure of this spiritual mulady. as to be able to discharge all the duties of the life of God: But if men feed the vanity of their own minds, if they permit them to rave continually after things foolish, earthly and fenfuals and wilfully fupply them with objects to that end. and labour not for the mortification of this evil frame,

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frame, in vain shall they expect to bring their minds at any time, or on any occasion, to be steady in the thoughts of heavenly things. If it be thus with any, as it is to be feared it is with numbers of professors, it is their duty to mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good," and not before. When the power of sanctifying grace hath made the mind habitually spiritual and heavenly, thoughts of such things will be natural unto us, and accompanied with delight:

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2. Be always sensible of your insufficiency to raife, or to manage spiritual thoughts duly, in your minds. But in this case men are apt to suppose, that they can think of what they please, and that their thoughts of whatever kind are their own; and therefore they need no affiltance: And nothing will convince them of their folly, until they are burdened with an experience of the contrary, respecting spiritual things. The advice is clear and express, 2 Cor. iii. 5. " Not that we are fufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency 56 is of God." The Apostle speaks principally of himself, and other Ministers of the Gospel, of fuch as were most eminently furnished with spiritual gifts and graces; and if it be so with them, and that with respect to the work and duties of their callings, how much more is it fo with with others, who have not their graces nor office? If men do suppose that of themselves, exclusive of divine grace and the supplies of the Holy Spirit, they can exercise their minds in spiritual thoughts; no wonder they are disappointed, disquieted, and live barren and joyless all their days, while and to entitlements this want shine

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By strength of natural abilities, men may frame thoughts of God and heavenly things in their minds; they may methodize them by rules of art, and express them elegantly to others; but even while they do fo, they may be far enough from being fairitually-minded; in their thoughts there may be no actings of faith, love, or holy delight in God, or of any grace at all. But fuch alone are the things we should enquire after, as in these only, fpiritual-mindedness is properly exercised and evidenced; and with respect unto these, all our fufficiency must be of God. There is no truth more generally granted by persons of underflanding, in notion or theory, than this, " that of ourfelves we can do nothing ;" and yet none more neglected in daily practice. Men profess they can do nothing of themselves, and vet engage both in religious duties, and in their temporal concerns, as if they could do all things.

3. Though you should be unskilful in, and not able to carry on a regular flated meditation on spiritual subjects, yet you may be spirituallyminded. For there is required in folemn, stated 4. What-

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meditations, fuch an exercise of natural faculties and abilities, as fome through ignorance and weakness are incapable of. A man may not have capacity and ability to carry on an extensive merchandize in the world; the knowledge of the different climates and featons, and of the feveral productions and commodities of the nations of the earth, with the arts, contrivances and accounts, which belong to a large foreign trade, may be above his comprehension, and he may quickly rain himfelf in the undertaking: Yet the abilities of this man may ferve and enable him to carry on a retail bufiness in a small shop; and wherein he may possibly thrive as well, and get as good an effate, as any of those whole greater capacities lead them forth to more exrentive and bazardous undertakings. So in a spiritual respect; the natural faculties of some are not fufficient for a flated meditation; they cannot place things in that method and order which is requifite, nor can they frame the conceptions of their minds into words fignificant and expressive; yet as to frequent thoughts of God, and a spiritual disposition of mind, they may thrive, and be kilful beyond most others of greater natural abilities. We ak sentioned la noger.

But as flated meditation is a necessary duty; yea, the principal way whereby our spiritual thoughts do profitably exercise themselves; I would add another direction,

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4. Whatever gracious principle refides in the mind, we cannot attain to a ready exercise thereof in a way of spiritual meditation, without great diligence and great difficulty. Unless the most fruitful ground be manured, it will not bring forth a good or profitable crop. As well may a poor man expect to be rich, without industry; or a weak man to be strong and healthy without food and exercise; as for any professor to be spiritually minded, without earnest endeavors after it: Do you enquire what is requisite thereunto? I will suggest a few Rules which are necessary to be observed; but if disregarded, such an holy frame will not be attained.

1. A continual worth is to be kept against the incurfions of vain thoughes, especially in those feafons, wherein they are apt to obtain advantage. If they are fuffered to make an inroad into the mind, and we accustom ourselves to give them entertainment, and fuffer them to lodge within; in vain shall we hope to be spiritually-minded. Herein confifts a principal part of that duty which our Saviour fo frequently, fo emphatically, chargeth on us, To WATCH: And unless we keep a ftrict watch, we shall be betrayed into the hands of our spiritual enemies; for all such thoughts are but making provision for the fielh to fulfil its defires in the lufts thereof, however they may be disappointed as to actual fm. Always should we remember the advice, Prov. iv. 23. F 3 ALINTY UNL « Keep

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"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the iffues of life."

2. Carefully avoid all focieties, and callings in life, which are apt to feduce the mind to an earthly and fenfual frame. If men will venture on those things, which (they have found by EXPERIENCE, or may find by OBSERVATION) do draw off the foul from an heavenly frame, unto that which is contrary thereto; they will be filled with the fruit of their own ways. And with lamentation I add, that professors by their common converfation with one another, and with others, walking, talking and behaving themselves like other men, and being as full of the world, as the world is of itself; they have hereby lost the grace of being spiritually-minded within, and stained the glory of profession without. The rule obferved by David will manifest how careful we ought to be in this respect, Ps. xxxix. 1, 2, 3, 1 faid I will take heed to my ways, that I fin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth

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" with a bridle, while the wicked is before me:

, " I was dumb with filence, I held my peace even

" from good, and my forrow was flirred; my

sheart was hot within me, while I was musing

the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue."

3. Put an boly constraint on the mind to abide in spiritual thoughts and meditations. This rule, is as the duty, both necessary and useful. The mind is too prone to start aside from duties, PURELY SPIRITUAL,

abiding in it: the more inward and spiritual any duty is, and which hath no external advantages, the readier is the soul to decline it. As for instance, it will be more apt to decline private, than public prayer; and sooner omit meditation than prayer: And other things likewise will draw it and, by objects without, and various stirrings of the affections within. An holy constraint is therefore to be put upon it, with a sudden rejection of what starts up to divert or disturb the mind: And we should call in all constraining motives (as the love of God, and of Christ) to keep the mind steady to its duty.

4. Diligently endeavour in the ufe of means to furnish the scul with that knowledge of heavenly things, which may administer continual matter of spiritual thoughts from within our felues. The want hereof is that which keeps many from proficiency in this duty. As a man may have fome skill or ability for a trade, but if he hath no materials, he must fit still and let his trade alone; so must professors do, as to the work of holy meditation: Whatever be the ability of the natural faculties, invention or memory, if they are not furnished with knowledge of spiritual things, which are the subject matter of such meditation, they must let it alone: Hence the Apostle exhorts the Colossians, to " let the word of Christ dwell richly in them with all wisdom;" and unless we abound.

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Saton, the will one. By various artifices he continually labouts to divert us from religious dusties; and with respect to this duty, when we hand thus before the Lord, he is always at our eight hand to resist us. To this must be referred, men's taking up with trisles when they have set themselves to the duty, and ending the exercise in vain imaginations. Steadiness in the resistance of him on these occasions, is one great part of our spiritual warfare; and soolish or corrupt thoughts are his engines, which it becomes the christian to resist at all times, especially when engaging in spiritual meditation.

the needful things of this tife, and have our affections to the world mertified. Otherwise, no man can be said to be spiritually-minded; the affections cannot be under the power of divine grace, nor can spiritual things be relished. Perhaps some may say, "That if all these things are requisite, it will take up a man's whole time to be spiritually-minded; but they hope to attain it at an easier rate." Though it may prove an hard saying to some, yet I must, and my heart would reproach me, if I should not say, that if the principal part of our time be not spent about these things, whatever we suppose, we have neither life

nor peace. The first fruits of all were to be offered unto God: If the best be not his, he will have nothing; it is so as to our time: And tell me, how can you fpend your time better, or your lives to better purpose? Some spend so much of their time in things, as is both a shame to themselves, and matter of continual forrow to their christian friends. Do you think you hadexistence merely to spend your time and strength in trades and in pleasures, or to the satisfaction. of the hurtful lufts of the flesh and of the mind? Have you time enough to eat, to drink, to fleep, to talk unprofitably, it may be corruptly, in all forts of unnecessary societies; but have not time enough to live unto God? Observe and consider, you came into the world under this law, " It is-" appointed to all men once to die, and after " that is the judgment." The end why life isgranted to us here, is, that we may be prepared. for that judgment; if this be neglected, if the chief part of our time be not improved to this. great end, you will fall under the awful fentence m ont of it unto eternity.

But as men are apt to mistake in this matter,. I would be a little more particular. If you suppose that the things which have been suggested as your duty, do tend to take you off from lawful employments and recreations, and therefore you are unwilling to purchase any frame of mind, at so dear a rate; or if you think, that to be spiritually.

spiritually-minded you must be moped, and disregard the common business of life, you are mistaken, and may be affured I am on no fuch defign. I aim not to take men out of their lawful earthly callings, but to bring spiritual affections and thoughts into union with, and a management of them. The things mentioned will deprive you of no time, to which you can justly lay claim, but will fanctify it all. Industry in temporal affairs is in itself very commendable; if in nothing elfe, it hath this advantage, that it is a means of preferving men from those excesses in lust and vices, which otherwise they would very likely run into: And among the two classes into which mankind are generally diffributed, those who are industrious in life are far more amiable and useful than such who spend their time in idleness and pleasure. However, industry is capable of being greatly abused, by devouring the time and seasons of religious duties, by earthly-mindedness, covetousness, and the like pernicious vices invading and possessing the mind. There is no lawful calling or occupation in life, that absolutely excludes spiritual-mindedness from them engaged in it; nor is there any that doth necessarily include it. Men may be in the meanest of employments, and be possessed of the grace; and others may be in the best and highest, and nevertheless be destitute thereof. It may be faid, " forely MINISTERS must needs be " spiritually-minded, as tis their duty and work es merely

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" merely to fludy spiritual and heavenly things. " to meditate on, commit them to memory, and " fpeak of them unto others." But, awful. thought! A man may with great industry engage in these things, and yet his mind remote frombeing spiritual; the event declares it may be so, and the reasons of it are manifest: It requires as much, if not more watchfulnels, care, and humility, for a minister to be spiritually-minded in the discharge of his calling, than to any else of mankind in theirs: And that (as for other reafons, fo) because the commonnels of the exercise of fuch thoughts, with their delign upon othersin their expressions, will take off their power and efficacy. He will have little benefit by his own. ministry, who in the first place doth not feek an. experience in his own heart, of the power of the truths which he teaches unto others: And there is evidently as great a failing among ministers, as among any other fort of christians.

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In the exercise of industry in any calling, unless men labour also to be spiritually-minded, there can be no profitable fruits, neither life nor peace: To this, all the rules or things just mentioned are necessary; I know not how any of them can be abated, yea more is required than is expressed in them. If you burn this roll, another must be written, and many things of the like nature must be added unto it. You see the objection, from the expence of time in their obser-

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vance,

vance, is of no force; for a man may do as much work, when he is spiritually-minded, as whill he was carnal? Spiritual thoughts will no more hinder men in their business, than thoughts which are vain and earthly, for which all forts of men can find leifure, even in the midst of their employments. If it be necessary that you should take much of the chast of the world into the mind, yet is it capable of such measures of grace, as shall preserve it sincere towards God.

7. We must dedicate some part of our time peculiarly to religious duties; else they will never be performed in a proper manner, nor can spiritualmindednels be preferred. Some christians have by experience found the defulness of this rule; but yet how many, if they lofe their feafons, lofe alfo their duties! It hath been the complaint of fome, " that the urgency of business, and multiplicity of temporal affairs, driving them at " first from the fixed time of their religious exercifes, brought them afterwards into a course of neglecting duty itself." It is our wildom, therefore, to fer apart constantly some portion of time for exercifing our thoughts about spiritual things; yea it is our indifferfible dury to redeem time for this purpole; and if you feriously intend holy meditation, chuse those feafons for it wherein you are best able to discharge it, when the natural vigour of the spirit is most free and active. Possibly some may fay, " this may be es fuch

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" fuch a time, as the concerns of the world do " most earnestly call for, and on which they re-" quire our attendance." True, that is the feafon I would recommend: The more the purchase of it stands us in, the more useful may the feafon be: We are not at any time to ferve God; if we will allow only the refuse of our time to this duty, when we have nothing elfe to do, and it may be through a buffle in the world are fit for nothing elfe ; we are not to expect any great fuccess in it. This is one pregnant renson, why professors are so cold, formal, lifeless in spiritual duties, namely, " the times and feafons which . " they allot to them." When the body is wearied with the labour and occasions of the day, and probably the mind indisposed in its natural faculties and powers, even by the means of necellary refreshment for the body; THEN men think themselves meet to treat with God about the great concerns of his glory and their own louis. But this is condemned by the prophet Mal. i. 8. " If you offer the blind for facrifice, is it not evill and if you offer the lame and fick, is it " not evil I offer it now unto thy governor, will " he be pleafed with thee, or accept thy perfor!" Shall we think to offer that time unto God, in which we are unment to appear before an earthly ruler? and yet in my account fuch are the feafons, especially the night seasons, which most men chuse for the duties of religion. As the time itself should

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should be a free-will offering unto God; and as the law of nature, and all the laws of holy institutions do require, that we should serve God with the best that we have; so let us henceforth devote the choicest part of our useful time unto him: And to excite you to greater diligence in suturity, consider, how little of your time you have as yet offered to God, beyond the day which he hath demanded for himself by an everlasting law; hay its well if we have not sobbed him of a large portion of that appropriated time.

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8. A reverence of God and spiritual things, must not only be habitual and cherifhed in the mind, but always exercifed in our entrance on religious duties. H we rull into thoughts of heavenly things, without a due reverential preparation, we shall quickly find ourselves at a loss; " grace to serve God. with reverence and godly fear," is required in all things wherein we have to do with him. Endeavour therefore to get your hearts deeply affected with an awful reverence of God, and an holy regard unto the nature and excellency of the things you would meditate upon: Hereby your minds will be composed, and the vain and earthly thoughts, which are apt to arise and divert you from the duty, will be cast out. If various thoughts do conflict in our minds, some for this world, and some for another, those for this world may carry it for a feafon; but where a due reverence of God hath cast out the bond-woman

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and her children, vain thoughts and imagination; the mind will be at liberty to exercise itself on spiritual things. Should you after this previous preparation find yourselves perplexed, or lifeless, not able to persist in spiritual thoughts with freedom and delight; then

g. Gry to God for affifunce. Supply the brokennels of your thoughts with PRAYER, according
as either the matter or your infirmities do require. Bewail the darknels, instability and weaknels of your minds, so as to groan within for deliverance and help; and if your designed meditations do issue only in a renewed sense of your own
insufficiency, with application to God for supplies, they are by no means lost as to a spiritual
account. When the soul labours for communion
with God, but sinks into broken consuled thoughts,
under its own weaknels; yet if the christian
looks to God for relief, his mourning and petitions will be accepted with his maker, and be
profitable unto himself; and hand account its

If any should think, after reading these directions and rules, that both the frame of mind, and the right discharge of this duty, may be otherwise attained; if you suppose that spiritual-mindedness, and holy meditation, deserve not all this cost and charge; judge by what is past, whether it be not adviseable to give over, and let them alone. 'Tis as good lie quietly on the ground, as continually attempt to rise, and never once effect

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effect it. Shall I call upon you to remember, how many unfuccessful attempts you have already made, and all have come to nothing, or to that which is as had as nothing. I cannot say that in the way new recommended, you will always succeed; but I fear you will never have success in this duty, without attending to such methods and things as are of the same nature and tendency with those prescribed. I will only add,

. 10. Be not differenged with on capterobetfion, that all you nam attain to in the discharge of this duty, is fo littles fo contemptible, that it is to no purpose to perfift in it : Nor be ye swaried suith the difficulties you encounter in its performance of Y an have to de with him, who will not break the bruifed reed, and whole will it is, that none frould despile the day of fmall things. If there be in this duty a BRADE MIND, it is accepted : He that can bring into this treasure, only the mites of broken defires and ejakulatory prayers, to they be his beff; shall not come behind them who can into it out of their greaten abundance in skill and ability. To faint and give out, because we cannot arise so fuch a height as we aim at, is a fruit of pride and unbelief. He who gains nothing else by continual endeavours after boly fixed meditations, but only an active fenfe of his own wawerthiness, is a sufficient gainer smidst all his pains; but ordinarily it shall not be fo; constancy in the duty lliw or singelly attempt to rife, and never of ca

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will give ability for it. They who confcientioully abide in it, shall increase in light; willdom, and experience, till they are able to prosecute it with greater success.

CHAP. VII.

The grace and duty of spiritual-mindedness stated in, and evidenced by, our affections.

IN the beginning of this treatife, spiritualmindedness was reduced to three heads:

I. The usual exercise of the mind in its thoughts and MEDITATIONS on heavenly things.

II. The habitual frame and inclination of the mind in its AFFECTIONS. And

III. A complacency of mind from the fatisfaction and delight it finds in spiritual things.
The first hath been largely considered, as that
which leads to the others, and gives the most
sensible evidence of the state enquired after. It is
the stream, which rising in the fountain of our
affections, glides into an holy rest and complacency of soul. The two last I shall now discuss
together, and therein briefly comprehend what it
is to be spiritually minded.

The great contest of heaven and earth is about the affections of the poor worm, which we call Man. That the world (hould contend for them) is no wonder; it is the best to which it can pretend: All things here below are capable of no higher ambition than to be possessed of the affections of men; but that the holy God should engage in the contest, and firive for our affections. is an effect of infinite condescension and grace. Our affections he afketh for, " My fon give me " elfine heart;" and we may be affired he will accept nothing from us without the affections: They are our all, the only power of our fouls, by which we may give away ourselves, even from ourselves, and become another's. Unto whom we give our affections, unto him we give ourfelves, our all; and unto whom we give them not, whatever we give, in a fense we give nothing at all: For in what we do to, or for others, whatfoever is good, valuable, or praife-worthy, in it, proceeds from the affections with which tis done. To give to the poor, without pity or compassion, to supply the wants of the saints, without love and kindness; with other actions and duties of the like nature, are things of no value, and will neither recommend us to God nor men. Whatever we do in the service of God, whatever duty we perform on his command, whatever we fuffer for his name fake, if it proceed not from a cleaving of the foul to him. by our affections, it is contemned by him, and he owns us not: So if a man would give to God all the substance of his house, without love, it would.

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would in like manner be despised. On the other hand, however diligent, industrious and fedulous we may be in and about the things of the world, yet if it hath not our affections, we are not of the world. Affections are the feat of all fincerity, and are in the foul, as the helm in a thip, if it be held by a skilful hand, he turneth the whole vessel which ever way he pleaseth. If God's powerful hand of grace is upon our affections, he turns our fouls to a compliance with his inflitutions, inftructions, and all forts of providential dispensations; and he holds them firm against all winds and storms of temptations, so as they shall not be hurried on pernicious dangers: And when the world hath the hand on the affections, it turns the mind, with the whole foul, to its interest and concerns; and it is in vain to contend with any thing, that hath the power of our affections in its disposal, for it will prevail:1 .500 more i and total and the

It is therefore of the highest importance rightly to consider, how things are stated in our affections, and what is the prevailing bent of them. Our affections are either spiritual or earthly: God, or the world, must have our hearts; and our predominant inclination or edge is towards heaven, or towards things here below. But before we consider the nature and operations of spiritual affections, it will not be improper to attend to those motives, which God

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is pleased to use, to call off our affections from earthly things: They are such as cannot be neglected without the greatest contempt of divine wisdom and goodness; and they may be instrumental of engaging us to set our affections on things above, which is to be spiritually-minded.

I. God bath in all manner of instances poured contempt on the things of this world, in comparison of those which are spiritual and beauenly. All things here below were at first exceeding good, not only in their nature, but in the use to which they were defigned; they were then defirable, and the enjoyment of them would have been a bleffing, without danger of temptations for they were the ordinance of God, to lead us to the knowledge and love of him. But fince the entrance of fin, whereby the world fell under the curfe, and into the power of Satan; the things of it, by his influence, are too effectual to draw off the heart and affections from God. By them doth the adversary of souls blind the eyes of fuch as believe not; and the chief way by which he doth it, is by promifes of fatisfaction unto all the lufts of the mind, with a proposal of all that is dreadful in the want of them, The things of the world being in this state, and used to this end, through the craft of the evil one, and the folly of the human mind; God hath hewed by VARIOUS INSTANCES, that they are all vain, singled to attend to those motives, which God

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He did it most fignally in the life and death of Christ. What can be seen or found in this world, after the fon of God hath frent his life in it, not having where to lay his head; and after he went out of it on a cross. Had there been ought of real worth in things here below, certainly he had enjoyed, if not crowns and empires which were all in his power, yet fuch goods and possessions as men of fober reason, and moderate affections. do effects a competency: But things were quite otherwise disposed, to manifest that there is nothing of value or use in these things, but only to support nature to the performing service unto God, by which they are ferviceable to eternity. Christ never attained, he never enjoyed more than daily fupplies of bread out of the flores of providence and for which alone he hach inflructed us to pray: And in his cross, the world proclaimed all its good qualities and powers, and bath given to the christian its naked face to view and contemplate. Hence is that inference of the Apollic, Gal. vi. 14. " God forbid that I fhould glory, " fave in the crofs of our Lord Jefus Chrift. " whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I " unto the world." Since I believed in Christ, fince I have had a fense of the power and virtue of his groß. I have done with all things in this world, it is a dead thing unto me, nor have I any affection oiso A

effection for it. No man can fet his affections on earthly things, who hath any regard to the pattern of Christ, or is in any measure influenced by the efficacy of his crofs. My LOVE IS CRU-CLPIED, faid an holy marter; he, whom his foul loved, was fo; and in him, his love to all things here below. Oh, that any of us, should inordinately love the things of this world, and perplex ourselves about the power, riches and goods of it, who have had a spiritual view of them in the crofs of Christ I was veded to marry

. It may be faid, that the circumstances mentioned were necessary to the fon of God, as the faviour and redeemer of the church; and therefore it doth not follow, that we ought to be poor, and to want all things as he did. I confels it doth not, and therefore recommend industry in the various callings of life. But as 'tis to be feared, this plea, and others which have been offered, " as providing only a competency 44 for me and my children, to fecure fome fatisfacst tion in life, and reputation in the world. &c." have often been but coverings for a shameful attachment, and engagement of their raffections unto the world; fo this necessarily follows from the example of Christ; that what he did forego and trample on for our fakes, ought not to be the object of our affections; nor can fuch affections prevail in us, if he dwells in our hearts by world. It is a dead thing and one, now have Ania nothella

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Again, God hath poured contempt on carnal things, in his dealings with the Apostles, and generally with all that have been most dear unto bim. The Apostles were employed in a work of the greatest advantage to his interest and kingdom; to them was committed the laying the foundations of the glorious kingdom of Christ in the world. Who would not think, that he should provide for them, if not Principalities and Popedoms, yet at least ARCHBISHOP RICS and BISHOPRICS, with other good ecclefiaftical dignities, livings, and preferments? Hereby they would have been meet to have converfed with Princes, and been freed from the caprice and contempt of the vulgar. But we fee, infinite wisdom otherwise disposed of them, and their concerns in this world: They were exercifed not only with the common afflictions and calamities of this life; but they lived and died in a condition of poverty, reproach, diffress and perfecution. God fet them forth as examples unto nobler ends; namely, of light, grace, zeal, and holinefs; and likewife to manifest of how little concern to our real bleffedness, is the abundance of things here below; and to demonstrate, that the want of all may consist with the highest participation of the divine love and favour. Read the 1 Cor. iv. 7. and the following verses. If the confideration hereof hath no weight with others, undoubtedly it ought to have with

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with such who are called to preach the Gospel, and are frecessors to the Apostles. There can be nothing more ablard and fhameful, nothing more opposite to the intimation of the wisdom and will of God, in his dealings with the first and most honourable dispensers of it, than for fuch persons to seek, and press greedily after fecular advantages in worldly titles, honours, wealth, and power. Hence there have been endeavours to separate those who were dedicated to the ministry of the Gospel, from all fecular dignities and revenues; and fome have maintained. that they were to live on the free contributions of the people: But this tenet was quickly condemped as HERESY in honest Wiekliff, and the Clargy have gotten the victory, and now effects all due unto them, that they can by any means obtain. But from the beginning it was not fo; and it is well, if in fuch a way, men are able to maintain the frame of mind we are enquiring after, with which are connected life and peace.

Again, God continues to cast contempt on earthly things, by giving always the greatest portion to his abowed enemies. This was a temptation under the old covenant, but is highly inftructive under the new. None will judge those things to be of real value, which a wife man casts out daily nate fwine; making little or no use of them in his family. Those monsters of men, Nero and Heliogabalus, so pernicious to human fociety, drive

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fociety, that their not being, would have been to appearance the interest of mankind, had more power over the things of this world, than ever had the best of men. Look on all the principal treasures and powers of this world, as in the hand of one of these tyrants, and so disposed of by divine providence; and you may fee at what rate God values them. Doth not God proclaim herein, that the things of this world are not to be so esteemed? If they were, and had a real! worth in themselves, would the righteous God make fuch a distribution of them? Those whom he most esteems, have comparatively the meanest share, and many are exercised with all the evils? with which the want of them can be attended; while his open and avowed enemies have more than they know what to do with. Who then would fet their affections on those things which God poureth into the bosoms of the vilest of men? It plainly appears, you may go and take the world, and take a curfe, death, and hell along with it y and " what will it profit a man " to gain the whole world and lose his own foul?" What can any man do, who considers this, and who will not forego all his hopes and expectations from God; but retreat unto the faith and purfuit of things fairitual and eternal, as containing an excellency in them incomparably above all that may be enjoyed here below. it is might a marine to be any facial faithfaction in march about any person before.

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Again, God pours contempt on earthly things, in giving antiquel inflance of their uncertainty and emptines, outerly disappointing many that have had expectations from them. The ways are various, the inflances so multiplied, that the greater part of mankind (unless they are like the fool in the Gospel) do live in perpetual sears, or apprehensions, that they shall speedily lose what they hensions, that they shall speedily lose what they enjoy; or otherwise they must be under the power of a shapid security. But there is such an account given of them by the wise man, Eccles ii. unto which nothing can be added, and which neither reason, nor experience, is able to contradict.

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By these, and the like ways, doth God cast contempt on all things here below; discovering both the folly and falshood of the promises, which the world makes to decoy and entangle our affections. This therefore is to be laid as the roundation in all our considerations to what, or to whom, we shall cleave with our affections; that God hath not only declared the insufficiency of earthly things, to give us that rest and happiness aften which we seek, but hath also poured contempt upon them in his holy and wife disposal of them in the world.

2. God bath added to their vanity by shortening the lives of men, reducing their continuance here to so short and uncertain a season, as it is impossible they can take any solid satisfaction in what they enjoy here below.

66 Behold,

"Behold, thou haft made my days as an hand's " breadth, and mine age is nothing before thee." Hence the Pfalmist draws two conclusions; (1) " That every man at his best estate is but va-" nity." (2) " That every man walks in a vain thew: furely they are disquieted in vain, " he heapeth up riches, and knows not who " shall gather them." Pf. xxxix. 5, 6. When men lived eight or nine hundred years, they had opportunity to taffe all the fweetness that was in creature-comforts, to make large provisions of, and to have long projections about them: But when they had fo, they all issued in that wickedness which "brought the flood on the " world of ungodly men." And the case is the fame to this day; the more men enjoy of this world, and the longer they possess earthly things. the more will they abound in fin, and provoke God, unless divine grace interposes. But now, God hath reduced the life of man to the small pittance of feventy years; and that space is generally shortened or embittered by various and innumerable incidents: Some years pals before men begin to have a tafte of this life; many things occur to make us weary of them before the end of our days; and but few of the human race, not one of a thouland, attain the years beyond which nothing can be reckoned but travel and forrow. As then the all-wife God hath left no fuch feafon for the enjoyment of the world,

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as might put a value upon it; so the uncertainty and shortness of human life (the strongest of mankind cannot insure the next day) render all contrivances and endeavours about earthly things, both vain and soolish. And when it is remembered, that he whose continuance is so short and uncertain here, is notwithstanding a candidate for eternal happiness or misery; and that his biessedness depends wholly on setting his affections on things above; must not all they who place them on things below forfeit all pretensions to reason, as well as bid defiance to the grace of God?

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3. Ged bath openly and fully declared the danger there is in these things, as to their enjoyment and use. What multitudes of fouls miscarry by an inordinate adherence to them? They are the matter of those temptations, whereby the souls of men are ruined for ever: The fuel that supplies the fire of their lufts, until they are confumed by it. Though there are many principles of temptation, many causes which concur to its efficacy, as sin, Satan, and wicked men; yet the matter of almost all ruinous temptations, is taken from among the things of this world; and indeed every thing that is in the world, is too apt to be abused to that end. It were easy to shew, that there is nothing defirable or valuable in the whole world, but is reducible to a subserviency to one or other of the lufts of the mind, and is applicable

cable to the interest and service of temptations and fins. When some professors hear these things, they are apt to fay, " Let the dream be " to them that are openly wicked, and the ines terpretation of it unto them that are profligate " in fin; unto unclean persons, unto drunkards, oppressors, proud and ambitious persons, may " be it is fo; but as for us, we use the things " of this world with a due moderation, and they are no fnare unto us." But to own they are used, to what end soever, if the affections are fet upon them, there is nothing, but one way or other, is thus a fnare and a temptation. We should be very careful how we adhere to, or value THAT, which is the cause and means of . the ruin of multitudes of fouls; By the warnings given us hereof, God evidently defigns to teach us, the vanity and danger of fixing our affections on things below.

4. By means of God's providential dispensations respecting these things, much wissom is requisite to distinguish betwire the use, and the abuse, betwire a lawful care about, and an inordinate cleaving to them. Few distinguish aright here, and many will find their great mistake in these things at the last day. Too many men deceive themselves in judging and acting by the most crooked and uncertain rules: Some make their own inclinations the rule and measure of what is proper and lawful; some the examples of others; some, the course

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of the world; some, their own real or pretended necessities: All of them confess, that there may be an inordinate love, and an abuse of earthly things, as the Scripture plainly affirms, and to which experience gives open testimony; but as to themselves, their care, love, and industry, concerning them, are all allowable : Hence we fee professors approving of themselves, as just stewards of their enjoyments; whilst their friends judge them covetous and earthly minded. And what if any of these self-approvers should be mistaken in their rule and application? Men at fea may have a fair gale of wind, wherewith they may fail smoothly for a feason; and yet, instead of reaching a port, may by it be brought on defiructive shoals, or rocks. What if that, which we effect allowable, as love, care and industry, should prove to be the fruit of earthly affections, predominant within us? What if that, which we approve of in ourselves, should be disapproved of God? we are then cast off for ever; we belong to the world, and with the world we shall perish. You see it is a dangerous thing for any to incline in his affections to the things of this world, because an excess is destructive, and at the fame time scarcely discoverable: Surely no wife man will venture freely, and often, to the edge of fuch a precipice.

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If any defire to be fatisfied, whether they do lawfully use and enjoy earthly things, and would liften liften to advice for preventing mordinase affections: REMEMBER, you are not proprietors, nor absolute possessors, but only sewards of earthly things, under him who is the great Lord and polleffor of heaven and earth; and for all you have received, you must give an account before angels and men. REMEMBER, you have another object for your affections, infinitely more worthy, which ought to have a predominant interest in your minds, and which will, if the world hath not possession. If God, and the things of God, be not the chief objects of out affections, we belong to the world; " ye can-" not ferve God and Mammon." REMEMBER, that as it is your duty " to mortify your members " that are upon the earth;" fo it is mortification alone, that will take us off from earthly things to the glory of God: And unless we experience this in our affections, we can have no good hope, that we are in any thing spiritually-minded. REMEMBER, in all instances of your duty, as stewards of earthly things, to attend diligently to the rule of God's word; elfe, the grade exhorsed to, may be abused. Let neither felf, nor unbelief, nor the custom and example of others, be heard to speak; but let the divine rule alone be attended to and cordially obeyed. Thus we may be preferved from (and have the evidence within ourselves, that we are not under) the power of an inordinate love to this world.

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affections on things below, he will not acknowledge us; nor will be accept of those affections, which we pretend to spare for him and spiritual things. If we abstain from open sins; if we abhor the lewdness and irreligion of men of the world; if we are constant in religious duties, and walk after the strictest sect in religion; may we not be accepted of God, though our hearts should cleave to the world? I answer, God hath peremptorily determined the contrary; and if other arguments will not prevail with us, he leaves us at last to this, I John ii. 15. James iv. "Go love the world, "and the things of it; but know assuredly, you do it to the eternal loss of your souls."

These sew arguments or motives, by which God is pleased to deter us from fixing our affections on earthly things; are such as he makes use of in the administration of his providence, and which I thought a proper introduction to the important subject before us, "To declare the important subject before us, "To declare the interest of our affections in this frame of spiritual-mindedness, and what they contribute to it." Without spiritual affections we cannot be spiritually-minded. And that they may be of this use, three things are required, and should be regarded.

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I. As to the PRINCIPLE: That our affections may be spiritual, which is the soundation of the whole, the spring of our being spiritually-minded; it is required that they be changed, or released with divine grace. To make this more plain and obvious, let us consider what is their state by valure, and then by what means they may be wrought on, respecting a change, or a renovation. The affections are not much unlike some things, which in their own nature are poisonous; but being corrected, and receiving a due temperament, from a mixture of other ingredients, they become medicinal, and of excellent use and benefit.

1. By nature our affections are all deprayed. Nothing in the whole nature of man, no power or faculty of the foul, is fallen into greater diforder by the entrance of fin, than are our affect tions. This depravation was manifest to the beather world; the wifest among them both saw and complained of it. They found a weakness in the mind, and were thoroughly fenfible of this disorder and tumult of the affections, in things moral; therefore, seeing it is discernible by the light of nature, the neglect of those who are not fensible of it in themselves, under the light of the Gospel, is inexcusable and greatly aggravated. Many instances might be given of the greatness of this depravation; as they are the feat of all lufts both of the flesh and of the G 5 SHAVE spirit :

fpirit; as they are the fpring and cause of all the actual fin that is in the world; as they are the way and means by which the foul applies itself to all finful objects; fo the affections will not be under the conduct of the mind: Rebellion against the light and convictions of the mind, is the very form by which this depravation manifests itself; let the apprehensions of the mind, and its notions of good and evil, be what they will, the affections reject them, and lead the foul in purfuit of their inclinations. Hence no natural or unconverted man living, doth in any measure unfwer the light of his mind, or the convictions of his understanding: Though he sees and approves of better things, yet he follows those which are forbidden and vicious. No greater fpiritual judgment can there be, than for men to be given up to their own evil affections, Rom. i. 26.

In general, this depravation of our affections may be reduced to two particulars: An averfation from God and spiritual things, which is the spring of all that dislike of God and his ways, with which the hearts of men are filled; which prompts them to say, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him? depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." And, an inordinate classing anto things vain, earthly, and sensual; which causes the soul to engage in the pursuit of them, as a horse rushes into the battle.

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Whilst our affections are in this state, we are far enough from being spiritually-minded; nor is it possible to engage them in an adherence to, or a delight in, spiritual things. And it ought to be observed, that whilst in this condition, the affections may be wrought upon two several ways, and yet not so renewed, as to be serviceable to this end.

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First, There may be various temporary impressions made on them; by the preaching of the word of God, or by judgments, dangers, difeases, and lively apprehensions of the approach of death. By a variety of causes, such impressions have been made on the affections, as have feemed for a feafon to have turned the ffream of them. Hence, we have many, who one day will be wholly for God, and resolved to crucify the flesh and the world, and to forfake fin and the pleafures of it; but the next, behold, they return to all their former executes and delights: From thefe occasional impressions, forde may, and do perfunde themselves, that there is a change in their hearts and affections, when there is hot; like a person who flatters himself that he hath lost his ague, because his present fit is over. These impreffions, when made on spiritual affections, are of great advantage to the foul; they make it to senew its engagements to God and duty, with love and resolution more intense: But the effects of these impressions on unreacted affections; are wete: G 6 neither

neither spiritual, nor durable; for the most part, they are but providential checks to the raging of their lusts; the next trial of temptation carries them away again to the world, and to fin.

Secondly, There may be an babitual change in the passions and affections of the mind, as to the inordinate and violent pursuit of their inclinations, and yet no gracious renovation of them. Education, philosophy, or reason, long afflictions, spiritual light and gifts have wrought this change: Hereby perfons naturally passionate and furious, have been made fedate and cool; those who have been fenfual, have become temperate; yea, and haters of religion have become zealous professors of it. These things, and many more of the like nature, have proceeded from a change wrought only on the affections, whilst the mind, will, and confcience, have been totally unfancsified. It is admirable to think, to what degrees of eminence in fobriety, fidelity, charity, and in all fofts of moral virtues, many among the Heathens attained, by this one principle of moderating the affections : But by this change, where it is alone, no man ever became spiritually minded. At least this change may be, and yet their diffike of God, and inattention and difrelish to spiritual things, not be cured. This alteration doth but turn the course of mens affections; the nature is not changed; they are the same in their spring and fountain as ever they were: Told on

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were: Yet this is beautiful and defirable in nature, and the glory of it; and he who hath by any means proceeded to such a moderation of his affections, as to be kind, benign, patient, public spirited, and temperate in all things, such an one will rife up in judgment against those, who professing themselves enlightened by divine grace, do nevertheless manifest, by being morose, impatient, angry, selfish and worldly, that they are not subdued by the power of that grace.

That we may be spiritually-minded, there is fornething else required as to our affections, than temporary and occasional impressions, with which many poor fouls deceive themselves, and cry peace, peace, when there is no peace; or than an babitual change, by which the affections are brought into some order with respect to earthly things, but their nature altered from rational to spiritual. There must be another work upon our affections, even INTERNAL RENOVATION, whereby not merely the course of their opera-, tions is changed, but their nature is altered and fpiritually renewed. I intend that which is expressed in the great evangelical promise, Isaiah xi. 6, 7, 8, 9. " The wolf shall dwell with the " lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the " kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and " the fatling together, and a little child shall " lead them: And the cow and the bear shall " feed, their young ones shall lie down togece ther; e titel

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ther; and the lion shall eat firaw like the ox; and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp; and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." You see a change is promised in the natures, principles, and inclinations of the worst, the most favage sinners, who experience the power of Gospel-grace.

This is that which is enjoined in a way of duty, Ephel. iv. 23. And be renewed in the spirit of your minds." There is a renovation of the mind lufelf, by the communion of Spiritual light; but the Spirit of the mind, that Whereby it is enlivened, led and actuated, that is to be renewed also. The spirit of the mind is evidently opposed to the " old man which is corrupt according to deceitful lufts," or to de-praved affections, and when our affections are regulated, and altered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, then are they renewed, and otherwise not at all. No other change will denominate them a spiritual renovation; hereby what are only natural affections in themselves, become fruits of the fpirit in them that believe; Gal. v. 22. 4 the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longfuffering, gentlenels, goodnels, fidelity, meekhels and temperance." They continue the fame in their effence, fubitance and natural powers, but are changed in their properties, qualities lities and inclinations, whenever a new nature is given to them. The waters at Marah were the fame waters after they were made sweet and useful, as they were before their cure, when so bitter they could not be drank: So was it with the waters of Jericho, which were cured by casting salt into them. Thus our affections continue the same as they were, but are cured by grace; their properties and qualities are cleansed, and the salt by which the cure or change is wrought, is, the love of God, proceeding from faith in him by Christ Jesus.

But as multitudes delude and deceive their own fouls, perfuading themselves there hath been a spiritual renovation, where there is none, and so think all is well, till they are wholly immersed in their former security; it greatly concerns us to enquire, of what nature that work which bath been on our affections? or what the change in them it or whether the renovation is real or hot? This momentous enquiry will be considered in,

CHAP. VIII.

Pointing out the difference between a change in the affections, which will not bear the trial y and that renovation by grace which renders them spiritual.

THAT there is an important difference, must be universally acknowledged; and to aftertain it, that we may not be of the number of them them that are deceived to everlasting ruin, we should spare no trouble, nor suffer a moment to run waste. Mere thinking and hoping will not suffice; the difference must be examined by Scripture-light, and by the experience of them that do believe in Jesus.

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1. Spiritual renovation extends itself to the whole fairit, foul, and body. IThef. v. 23. When we fay that we are fanctified in part only, 'tis not meant, that any faculty of the foul is unfanclified; but only that the work is not absolutely perfell in any of them. Sin may retain power in some one affection, as anger, love, fear, &c. more than in all the rest besides; and to which mens natural tempers, or their fituation and circumftances in life greatly contribute: Hence fome men find more difficulty in the mortification of one inordinate affection, than in crucifying all others. I have known professors thining exemplarily in all other christian graces, who have been scarce free from giving great scandal, by the excess of their passion, and easy provocation to it; and yet they have known, that the vigorous mortification thereof, is the most eminent pledge of their fincerity in other things: The trial of our felf-denial, lies in the things that our natural inclinations are strongest towards. However, in spiritual renovation, there is no affection but is sanctified; no one is left absolutely to the fervice of fin; all are made meet for inodi:

for holy exercises and operations, and do in proper feafons exert themselves accordingly, if the mind is renewed. The grace implanted in us, is called " the new man," because all the powers and faculties of the christian, are seasoned and affected with it. As nothing in our natures escaped the taint of fin, so nothing is excepted from the renovation that is by grace. He, in whom any one affection is utterly unrenewed, hath not one graciously renewed in him. Let professors then take heed how they indulge to any depraved affection, for it will be an unavoidable, and a strong impeachment of their sincerity. Think not to fay with Naaman, se God be mer-" ciful unto me in this thing, in all others I " will be for him?" To be entire for God, to cleave unto him, to have the heart circumeifed, to love him; is to have all our affections renewed or fanctified; when it is otherwise, there is a double heart, or a change which is not spiritual, because not universal. Thus there are many who are fober and temperate in most things, but the love of money prevails in them in a great degree, which to them " is the root of all evil." Again, fome feem to be religious, but through anger, envy, and the like, they bridle not their tongue, and fo prove their religion is also vain. Some likewife who feem to have had a mighty change wrought in them, and are superstitiously devout, do yet walk in the spirit of Cain towards the difciples

ciples of Christ; and if permitted, would foberly and resolutely set themselves to persecute and destroy. Some love the praise of men, which will never permit them to be truly spirituallyminded; and this was the vice of the antient philosophers ; by the principles of reason, and by severe exercise, they subdued their affections to great moderation about temporal things, but at the fame time they were flaves to vain glory and human praise. And in general, if men not spiritually renewed, were able to search themfelves, they would find, that some of their affections are so far from having an effectual change wrought in them, that they are rather a quiet habitation for fin, and that one fecret luft or other is cherished, which they must know to be pernicious to the foul. But in spiritual renovation, as just observed, every affection is fanctified according to its use in the life of God and holiness.

2. Spiritual renovation engages the affections to fix upon, and cleave to all spiritual things in their proper places, and for proper ends. The reason of our adherence to one, is the fame with respect unto all; that is, their relation unto God in Christ: Wherefore when the affections are renewed, the christian makes no choice in spiritual things, as cleaving to fome and refufing others; he adheres unto all, and an equal respect is required from us, to all the commands of God. Yet there are various distinctions in spiritual things, so as that ciolos

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PE fat a man may, and ought to value one above another, as to the degrees of his love and effect, altho' his love is to be SINCERE with respect to all. For inflance,

First, God bimself, as revealed in and by Christ, is not only the proper and adequate, but chief object of the affections, as renewed. He is fo, for his own fake alone; and whofoever loves not God for what he is in himself, and what from himself he is, and will be to us in Christ, (which considerations are inseparable) that man hath no true affection for any spiritual thing whatever. Not a few professors do in this deceive themselves, or are deceived; they suppose that they love heaven, and heavenly things, and the exercises of divine worship; but as to God bimfelf, they can give no evidence of any love to him, either, on account of the glorious excellencies of his nature, or their natural relation to him, and dependance on him, or on account of the manifestation of himself in Christ. and the exercise of his grace therein. But, whatever be pretended, there is no love to God, that proceeds not from these springs; and since all men profess they love God, we should strictly examine ourselves, on what grounds our pretention is founded. Is it because we indeed fee an excellency, a beauty in the glorious properties of his nature? Is it our great joy and fatisfaction, that God is what he is? Is it from the

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the gracious manifestation he hath made of himself; and his perfections in Christ, with the communication of himself unto us, in and by him? If it be, then is our love generous and divine, from the renovation of our affections: If not, we shall be at a loss, when called to our trial. God is the first object of our affections, and

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Secondly, In other spiritual things, renewed affections cleave unto them, according as God is in them. This alone gives them pre-eminence: God is loved for himself, all other things for him, in the measure and degree of his presence in them: Hence is the Lord Christ, even as to his human nature, the object of our love and affections in such a way and degree, as no other being or thing but God himself is, and ought to be. Evidences of the presence of God in perfons and things, are the only attractives of renewed affections.

Thirdly, In things which seem to stand in an equality, as to what is of God in them; yet for some especial reasons, our love may be stronger to one, than to another. Some particular truth, with grace communicated by it, may have been the means of our conversion to God; or of our edification; or peculiar consolation. The soul will have a distinguishing respect to and value for such truths: And the same as to christian duties; we may have had such an intercourse with God in

in some, as may give us a prevalent delight in them.

But notwithstanding these distinctions, renewed affections do cleave to all spiritual things, as such: The grand reason of their doing so, is the same in all, God in them; only they have several ways or degrees of acting towards them. The spiritually minded, have a regard to all God's precepts, a delight in all his counsels, a love to himself, and to all his ways; which cannot be said of any beside, whatever other change may have been wrought on their affections.

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3. The third difference is, there may be a change in the affections, so as that men may delight in religious worship, and be diligent in it; but it is the spiritual renovation of the affections that only gives delight in God, in the several duties of religious worship.

Where the Gospel is publickly protessed, there is great variety in the minds and practices of men about the duties of religious worship; many are stout hearted, and despile, or wholly neglect the observance of them; some attend on them, as a matter of form, or from principle of education, and probably from some convictions of their necessity; and there are others, who are diligent in attending, and greatly delight in them, (according to the way they chuse) who yet give no evidence of the renovation of their minds. For professors may be greatly affected with the outward part of worship, and the manner of its performance;

ance, and have no delight in what is internal and spiritual. Many of the Jews were delighted with the preaching of Ezekiel, because of his eloquence, and the elegance of his parables, chap. xxxiii. 31, 32. Hence they delighted, and were diligent in hearing him, and called themselves the people of God; tho' we find they lived in fin, and their hearts went after covetoulness. The same may be the case with many in our day, with reference to the gifts of those who preach the word; not but that we may prefer one minister to another, and yet be truly fincere in our delight in the word itself: But great care is to be taken, that our delight centers not in outward things, which is the case with numbers, particularly the PAPISTS: They will with much fervor, and many evidences of devotion, and fometimes with difficulty and danger, repair to their places of worship; and yet when they are present, understand not one word, whereby their hearts might be excited to genuine acts of faith, love and delight in God; pompous ceremonies, thew, mulic, and other incentives of carnal affections, make great impression on, and affect them; separate these things from divine service, they would have no delight in it; but affections spiritually renewed are not concerned in these externals; yea, if they who are renewed, should be engaged in the use of them, they would find them means of diverting their minds from the proper

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hav But proper work of divine worthip, rather than an advantage unto them. Two persons may attend the fame ordinances, with equal delight, on very diffined principles; as two men may come into the fame garden, one ignorant of the nature of the various herbs and flowers, and the other a skilful herbalish; both may be equally delighted, one with the colours and finell of the flowers but the other, with the confideration of their various natures, or their uses in medicine, and the like in Thus it may be in religious worthin; one is delighted with the outward administration. another with its spiritual efficacy at the same time. However, what there is of real order in the worthin of God, as it is an effect of divine wildom, for it is fuited and ufeful to spiritual affections, proceeding from the fame fpirit, by whom they were internally renewed: Every thing of God's appointment, is both delightful and useful. None can fay with higher raptures " how amiable are "thy tabernacles, O Lord!" than they whose affections are renewed, yet their delight terminates not in them!

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Again, Professors may delight in the external duties of worship, because hereby they comply with, and give some kind of satisfaction to their convictions. When conscience is awakened to a sense of the necessity of such duties, the mind will have no rest, no peace in the neglect of them:

But let them be attended to, in the seasons which conviction

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conviction and custom call for, conscience will be for fatisfied, as that the mind shall obtain present ease and refreshment. When the foul is: used to this relief, it will not only be diligent in performing those duties, but it will naturally delight in them: Hence many will not omit the duty of prayer every morning, who are refolved to live in fin all the day long; external duties are used by them, as an antidote against the sting and poison of fin, to allay its rage, but cannot expel its venom. The performance of those duties, though it heal not their wound, it affwageth their pain, and like the facrifices for fin under the law, dispelleth their present fears. "But their condition is dangerous, who when a fenfe of the guilt of fin returns upon them, betake themselves for relief to prayer or other duties; which having dilbharged, they foothe their troubled minds, and cry peace, although they have no real fense of the pardon of fin, nor any frength against it. It may be afked, Do not the best of men perform all fpiritual duties from a conviction of their neceffity? YES; but it is one thing to perform a dury from a conviction of necessity, as it is God's exdinance, (which conviction respects the mere duty) and another thing to perform it, just to give fatisfaction to a troubled mind, or to quiet conscience under its remorfe for fins against heaven: This begins and ends in felf; felf-fatisfaction is the fele defign of it. But in the performance of duties, from

from a conviction of their necessity; as God's ordinance; and of their use, in the way of his grace, the soul begins and ends with God. It seeks no satisfaction in them, nor finds it from them, but in and from God alone by them.

Again, The reputation of devotion in religious duties infentibly affect the unrenewed mind, with great diligence and delight in religious worthing However men are divided in their apprehension and practice; bowever different from, and contrary to each other, are their ways of worthin yet amongst all, yea in the fecret thoughts of them who outwardly contemn thefe things, it is a matter of reputation to be devout, diligent and firicle in and about the duties of religion. This greatly affects the buman mind, whilst pride is fecretly predominant; and the praise of men is more regarded than the praise of God. This confideration will prevail especially on those, who are concerned for the credit and honour of the particular way, which they profels, they will not only be diligent themselves, but zealous in drawing others to the same observances: These principles, " their own reputation," and " that " of their fect," constitute the life and foul of ancient Pharifailm; and according as the minds. of men are influenced with these views, so will a delight in the duties, by which their reputation is attained, grow in them. Every fuch corrupt end, as is the defire of reputation, or the praise of men,

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men, being prevalent in the mind; will univerfally influence the affections to a delight in external duties, until the person be habituated to them with great satisfaction.

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Again, Superstition engages the minds of many, to the most scrupulous diligence, and a delight in the performance of religious duties. Falle notions and apprehensions of God, his will, nature, and operations may befal the minds of men in all religions, true and false; it is an internal vice of the mind, and hath prompted many to fuch outward means of religious fervice, and a devout performance of those duties, as God instead of accepting, hath exprelly forbidden. Superstition hath not only excited men to a diligent performance of external duties, but spurred them on to most prodigious attempts, almost exceeding human nature, as well as human belief; but though this proves a great change wrought on the affections, it hath not the least connection with spiritual renovation: But

The principal reason, why men whose affections are only changed, (not spiritually renewed) do delight in religious worship, is, they place their nighteousness before God in them, and hope for their sake to be accepted with him. Whatever notions they may have of the righteousness of saith, or the righteousness of Christ, that which they practically trust to, is THEIR OWN: This discovers itself in their own breasts, on every trial that

that befals them; yea, when they cry unto the Lord, and pretend to faith in Christ; they quickly prove that their principal truft, is in themselves. In all that men can plead in a way of obedience, nothing bath a fairer pretence to a righteoufnels, than what they do in the worship of God; it is what he expects at their hands; and what is due unto him in the light of their consciences; religious acts towards him, are the best they can do to please him, which therefore they must put their trust in, or in nothing; and 'tis to be feared that many, as they fall frequently into fin, fo relieve themselves from the reflection of their consciences by a multiplication of duties, and renewed diligence in them. It is inconceivable, what delight men will take in any thing that fo much as feems to contribute to a righteousness of their own; it is fuitable to, and pleafeth the principles of corrupt nature, after the man is convinced of fin, of righteoufness, and of judg-This made the Jews fo pertinaciously adhere to the Levitical ceremonies and facrifices, and to prefer them to the Gospel, and the righteousness thereof: And so powerful an influence hath the defire of felf-righteousness upon the minds of men in the present day, that only perfuade them, righteoufness is to be attained by liberality and charity, or in the dedication of their substance to the use of the church; though once covetous, greedy and oppressive, they will H 2 lavish Filasir

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lavish their gold out of the bag, and give up all their patrimony to attain it. In brief, it is the strongest fortification of the foul, against Christ and his Gospel; and the last referve, by which it maintains the interest of self, against the grace of God.

These are the grounds and reasons of unrenewed persons delighting in religious worship,
and being diligent in its duties; and from these
considerations, it may be made too manifest,
that the greatest part of the devotion that is in
the world, doth not spring from spiritual renovazion, without which it is not accepted of GodThat you may clearly discover the difference between accessionally changed, and spiritually renewed, I
will just him at the grounds and reasons on which
"they that are Christ's" do delight in the institutions of divine worship, and attend them with
diligence.

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That all whose minds are renewed, have a peculiar delight in religious ordinances, is fully evident from examples of the saints in all ages: This hath been the great cause of their suffering persecution, and even martyrdom. If the primitive christians would, or could have omitted the observance of them, they might have escaped the rage of their adversaries: But they loved not their lives, in comparison to that delight which they had in observing the precepts of Christ; and as our Lord bimself upon all occasions, did declare

worship of God; so the Apostle, Heb. x. 25, 26, 27, gives it as an assured token of an unsound condition, and what tendeth to final apostacy, "the falling into a neglect of the duties "of evangelical worship." This is unquestionable: But our present enquiry is, wherefore do the spiritually-minded so delight in Gospel ordinances? and what is it that engageth their hearts to a diligent observance of them?

(1.) In general, they love, adhere to, and delight in the ordinances of divine worship, because they find faith, love, and other christian graces excited, and exercised in them. This is the first and immediate end of their institution. It is a pernicious miliake, to suppose, that any external duties of worship are appointed, or accepted forthemselves; many things destructive to the souls of men, have proceeded from this supposition. All instituted ordinances are but means to express and exercise faith, love, fear, trust, and delight in God; the end of all, is, that through and by them we may act those graces on God in Christ; and where this is not attended to, let them be never fo folemn as to their outward performance, or be performed with ever fo much diligence, earnefine's and delight, they are neither acceptable to God; nor beneficial to the worshipper. This is the first general spring of the christian's. love to divine ordinances, and of their delight in

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them: They have experience that in and by them, their faith and love are excited to a gracious exercise on God in Christ; for this end, are they ordained and bleffed of God, and are the effectual means of it, when their efficacy is not defeated by unbelief. When these graces are not in exercise, outward duties are fo far from being an approach unto God, that they fet us at a greater distance from him, and are utterly useless, and fruitless. Alas! how many professors come to ordinances, they know not why; and behave in them they care not how: They do not come to them as the means appointed for the exercise of faith in Christ, and love to him; they do not labour to ftir up these graces to action (if they possess them) and they suffer their minds to be diverted from the great end, partly by occafional temptations, and partly by regarding only what is external in the ordinances. But the spiritually-minded, come unto them with the defign, defire, and expectation of being directed, and excited by them to the exercise of divine faith and love; and their delign is not useless and inactive, but they diligently endeavour to be found in the exercise of them; not suffering their minds to be diverted from the pursuit of their defigns; and when they find it otherwise with them, they can have no rest in their fouls,

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ordinances, because, they are the means by which

a fenfe of divine love, and supplies of grace are come municated. So far as the affections are renewed. this is the principal attractive: Ordinances are the means or way of approach unto God, and we do not draw nigh to him as to a barren wilderness, where no refreshment can be obtained. To make a pretence of coming to God, and not with expectation of receiving great and good things from him; is, to despise him, to overthrow the nature of the duty, and deprive our fouls of all benefit whatfoever. We are always to come unto God, as to an eternal fpring of goodness. grace, and mercy; of all that we need, and of all that we can defire, in order to everlasting felicity: And the spiritually-minded do come for a fense of his love in Christ Jesus: In this our souls live, and without it, we are of all men most miserable. They who are humble and fincere in the duties of divine worship, as they look forfo do they in various measures receive this divine refreshment; the holy spirit sheds abroad the love of God in them, and witnesseth their adoption unto them. If we are frangers to this, if we have never received efficacious intimations of divine love, in and by religious duties, we cannot love, nor delight in them as we ought. When we delight in, and value ordinances, because we experience they are, and have been, means of communicating to us, a fense, and renewed pledges of the love of God in Christ, with the H 4 privileges davida

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privileges which depend thereon; then, are our affections renewed by the Holy Ghost.

And as God in Chrift is the fountain of all grace, the spiritually-minded approach unto God in the ordinances of divine worthip, for supplies of grace to arengthen and comfort them. They cleave unto them as the means of God's communication of grace and spiritual firength unto their fouls; and they are the ordinary way and means by which he hath done, and will do it. The word as preached, is the food of our fouls. 1 Pet. il. 2. 44 As new-born babes, defire the se fincere milk of the word, that ye may grow " thereby:" Prayer is the way of his appointment for our application to him, to obtain all the needful fupplies he hath proposed to us in the promifes of his covenant: In the facraments, the fame promifes are fealed unto us, and the grace represented in them, effectually exhibited : Meditation, confirms our fouls in the exercise of faith about it, and opens the heart for its reception. By these means, doth God communicate all supplies of grace; and hence true believers come, and cleave unto them, that they may receive grace to enable them to live unto him in all boly obedience, and to get the victory over their manifold temptations.

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(3.) As they attend religious worship, with these designs and expectations, so they have experience of the spiritual benefits they receive thereby, which

which more and more engages them to, and increases their delight in it. This, the unrenewed are firangers. to; they neither have the delign before-mentioned in coming, nor the experience of this efficacy in their attendance on ordinances: And this. is the great reason why professors grow so carelefs, and are fo negligent and lukewarm in their attendance; finding no real fpiritual benefit, they become very indifferent to religious duties; and at length, arrive to that frame, described Mal. i. 13. "Ye faid alfo, behold, what a weari-"ness is it, and ye have shuffed at it, saith the " Lord of hoffs." They only who have a fense of the efficacy of public worship, can cleave toit with fpiritual love and delight; and that fecret love to, and exquisite delight in the statutes and testimonies of God, which David expressed in Pf. exix. arofe from the spiritual benefit and advantage which he received by them, as he confantly declares. The renewed continually remember, what holy impressions they have made upon them, into what engagements their fouls. have been brought by them, what encouragements to faith and obedience they have thereby received, and fo they naturally long after a renewed fense of the enjoyments. When we do. not find in ourselves, this foundation of delightin religious duties, we can have no great evidence that our affections are renewed. lighted the trace of the attention of the

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A. Evidence

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(4.) The christian, whose affections are spiritually renewed, delights in the duties of divine worship, because, they are the great instituted way of giving glory to God. As they respect divine appointment, " to give glory to God," is the first and principal end of all religious duties: In them, acknowledgment is made of all the glorious excellencies of the divine nature, and of our relation to, and our dependance on him; and this is that which the christian designs in them: The pattern fet us by our bleffed Saviour in the prayer he taught his disciples, directs us to it; all the first requests concern immediately the glory of God, and the advancement thereof. Those therefore who fail in this design, err in all they do, as they never tend to the mark proposed to them: But the glory of God, is that which principally animates the fouls of them that believe in all their duties: This, their universal relation to him, and love in that relation, makes necessary; wherefore, that way and means by which we may directly and folemnly give glory unto God, (and such are all the duties of divine worship) is delightful and precious unto them.

These are the chief things wherein the operations of affections spiritually renewed, differ from those which are not, as to the ordinances and duties of divine worship; and which I pray God every reader may carefully confider, and feriously

lay to heart. I proceed to a

4. Evidence

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Lvidence of the difference between affections spiritually renewed, and those which have had only a general change wrought in them by convictions, and outward occasions; which is, there is an affimilation wrought in them unto spiritual and beauenly things, BY FAITH, when renewed; but otherwise, the affimilation is only BY IMAGI-NATION. This gives the most eminent distinction betwixt the frames of mind, whose difference we are examining. Affections spiritually renewed, are in all their operations and exercife under the guidance of faith. "We live " here by faith." If our affections deviate, or decline from the conduct of faith, they degenerate from their spirituality, and go into the fervice of superstition; blind offections groping in the dark after spiritual things, not having the light of faith to conduct them, have feduced the minds of men into all manner of superstitious imaginations and practices, and continue to do fo, to this day: When FAITH goes not before the affections to discover both way and end, the foul must fall into one snare and pit, or another; wherefore affections that are renewed, move not but as faith discovers their object, and directs them to it. We can love nothing fincerely with divine love, but what we believe with faith divine. "Faith works by love." Let our affections unto spiritual things be never so vehement, if they fpring not from faith, nor are guided by H 6 IL»

it, they are not accepted of God, nor will they promote the interest of holiness in our fouls: And this is the season that we so often see great and plausible appearances of spiritual affections, which yet endure only for a season; either, they atterly decay, and the mind loseth all sense of any impressions from them, and presently the maneven wonders he should be so sooisth, as to be busied and troubled with such melancholy fancies, and becomes as vile as any upon earth; or, he takes up, and rests in a farmal profession, and never attains to be spiritually-minded. And this is the best end, that our affections towards spiritual things can attain, when not guided by the light of faith,

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As faith hath a clear prospect and apprehension of spiritual things, discerning them duly as they are in themselves; fo by this light we see spiritual shings, not in any corrupt representation or imagination of them, but as they are in their own nature, kind, and proper use. This is one of the principal effects of faith, to discover to the foul, and fet before the affections, things spirisual and heavenly in their nature; beauty, and genuine excellency: This attracts them, if foisitually renewed, and engages them to cleave with delight to what is so proposed to them. The end God deligns, is to draw our hearts and affect tions unto himfelf; and to this end he gives us a glorious internal light, FAITH, by which we may

may differn the true nature of the things, that we are to purfue with love and delight; and without this, there can be nothing but falls images of spiritual things in our minds; not always as to the truth or doctrine concerning them, but as to their reality, power, and efficacy. And let it be observed, that the more steady our view of spiritual things is, by faith, the more firm and constant will our affections be in cleaving to them: And being thus led to, and fixed on fpicitual things, they will continually be affinilating unto the things themselves, becoming more andmore spiritual and heavenly. Whenever the affections cleave intenfely to any object, they receive an impression from it, (as doth wax from a. feat being applied to it) which changeth theminto its own likeness. So the Apostle affirms of fenfual perfons, " they have eyes full of aduletery," 2 Pet. ii. 14; and when men are filled. with the love of this world, which carries along with it all their other affections, as hopes, fears. and defires, they become earthly-minded. Their minds are fo changed into the image of the things themselves, as if they were made up of the earth warries orom statisticand and as him about

In like manner, when through faith, mendifcern and embrace heavenly things, they are every day more and more heavenly-minded. "The inward man is renewed day by day." Love is more fincere and ardent, delight is more fentible

and ravishing, defires are more inlarged; and by all, a tafte of heavenly things is heightened into experience animating and confolatory. See Rom. v. from the first to the fifth verse. This is the way by which one grace is added unto another in degrees: Great affimilation between renewed affections and their spiritual objects by this means may be attained. The mind hereby becomes the temple of God; and Christ also. dwelleth in believers, and they in him. Love in its proper exercise gives a mutual inhabitation. In brief, he whose affections are renewed, will be heavenly-minded, and in the exercise of his affections, that heavenly-mindedness will be increafed: THE PATTERN which we ought continually to fet before us, to which our affections ought to be conformed, is the Lard Christ; the fame mind and affections that were in him, should be in us, and to have our minds fo affected, is the principal part of our duty. THE RULE of our affections, in their utmost spiritual improvement, is the Scripture: The way marked out therein, is the only channel in which the stream of spiritual affections takes its course unto God; and as there is nothing more extravagant, than the affections of men who are tinctured with fome devotion, if they forfake the rule of Scripture; fo there is fuch a measure of heavenlymindedness attainable, through exercise and diligence, to which those who pretend highly to perfection,

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perfection, feem utter strangers. The state of our affections, as to a due exercise on, and an affimilation unto them, may be fixed, in an babitual fuitableness to spiritual things, upon the proposal of them; and in savouring or having a fweetness and delight in them; so making them the treasury of the foul. To this our affections will attain, if conformed to heavenly things, and by being fixed on them, the affections are more and more conformed, and become more spiritual and heavenly themselves. But it is not thus with such whose affections have only an occasional change wrought upon them; on the contrary, these persons design to debase spiritual things, to bring down things heavenly, to a conformity with their affections, which however changed, are not spiritual but carnal. And the carnal mind discerneth not the things of God. because they are spiritually discerned; it is destitute, as we have feen, of that divine light, by which they are discovered in their native beauty and glory; and where they are not thus viewed. the affections cannot cleave to them as they ought, nor will ever be conformed unto them: Filled with vain, foolish, proud imaginations. about spiritual things, such persons may be, but these terminate in presumption, superstition, wickedness, and destruction.

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Affigus some reasons why the affections are not more spiritual, with instructions to such as are declining in this part of the divine life.

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THERE are many, who have made a great appearance of vigorous, active, spiritual. affections: In some this vigor of spiritual affecsions is from the real power of grace exerting its efficacy on their hearts: In others, it is from other caufes, as for inflance, relief from conviction by spiritual illumination will produce this effect. And if the change is wrought in youth. then it is most eminent, be it of whatever kind it will; for then the affectious in their natural. powers are active, and bear great fway in the foul : But as men increase in age, and grow up in carnal wildom, as earthly things are more valued by them, and their care about them enlarges, fo spiritual affections abate and decay. every day. It is a fliame, and folly unutterable, that it should be so with any who profess to embrace that religion, in which there are fo many incomparable excellencies to endear and engage them to it more and more; but why should we hide what experience makes manifest in the fight of the fun; and what multitudes openly proclaim concerning themselves. Whilst some have vigorous active affections towards spiritual things, and.

and cherish them until they are assimilated and transformed into the image and likeness of things above; many experience no growth, vigor or assimilation of assertions; and others fall into a world decline, their moisture becomes as the drought in summer: They have no experience of the life and operations of the assertions respecting things spiritual, nor any comfort or resreshment from them; they honour not the Gospel with any fruits of faith, love, zeal or delight; nor are they any way useful to others, by their example: To consider these cases, I hope will be of advantage to us. And

I. Let us attend to the flowness and imperceptibility of the growth of our affections, in an affinibilation unto heavenly things, with the causes thereof. It cannot be denied, that the progress of our affections in spirituality, and their conformity to the things they are, or ought to be set upon, is too often very slow, and sometimes imperceptible: Yea, for the most part, it is a hard thing to find it satisfactorily in ourselves, or others. Our affections stand like shrubs in the wilderness; not like plants in an inclosed garden which are watered every day. But yet this is our folly, and our sin. What keeps many in this condition, is

(1.) The generality of christians are contented with their present measures, and design little more than not to lose the ground they think they have gained. This is a permissions folly, that both ruins the glory of religion.

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religion, and deprives the fouls of men of peace and confolation. But fo it is, professors have fome grounds of persuasion, or at least they hope, that "they are passed from death unto life," and are in a state of favour with God: This state, they will endeavour to preferve, by a diligent performance of the duties it requireth, and by avoiding fuch fins, whereby they might forfeit it; but as for diligence and endeavours to thrive in this state, to grow in grace, to be changed into the image of Christ from glory to glory, to press forwards towards the mark of their high calling, to be more holy, humble, righteous, and spiritually-minded, to have their affections more and more transformed into the likeness of things shove; there are but FEW, that fineerely apply themselves hereunto, or even to the means of these things. The measures, to which any professors have attained, satisfy the church to which they belong, and fecure their reputation in the world; and here they rest, speaking peace to their fouls: Such persons are like unto men, who live in a country, in which they are not only pressed with poverty, and all forts of misery, but also are obnoxious to punishment and death, if taken in it; well; they are told of another country, where as foon as they arrive, they shall be freed from all fear of punishment; and if they travel farther into it, they shall obtain plenty, riches, honours, and a vast inheritance: On this, they and Milm

they prepare themselves for the voyage or journey, to obtain an entrance and possession; but no fooner do they come within the borders, and fo are free from danger of punishment and death. but they fit down, and will go no farther, tho' fuch ineftimable things are before them: Hence it happens, that many of them through floth, negligence, or ignorance, rest short of the true bounds or limits of the country of liberty and peace, and danger and death furprize them unawares; which ruin could not have befallen them, had they industriously endeavoured to enter into the heart of the country, and possessed the good things thereof: And at best, being only in the borders, they are exposed to want, and continue poor and unhappy all their days. In like manner, men under the power of convictions, and of those reftless fears with which they are accompanied, will rouze themselves and enquire, how they may be delivered from the guilt and power of fin, and escape wrath and eternal mifery: In the Gospel, not only mercy and pardon are proposed to them, on their believing in Christ, which is the first entrance into the heavenly country; but spiritual strength, peace, and joy on an advance or progress made in it by faith and obedience: But many, when they have attained so far, as to have some hopes of pardon, and freedom from the curle, and are delivered from their tormenting fears, endeavour to preferve

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serve those hopes, and keep to that state, but will not pass on to a full enjoyment of the great and precious things of the Gospel, by a growth in grace and spiritual affections. But what numbers of them fall under wosul mistakes! supposing themselves to be in the Gospel state, it proves in the issue that they never entered into it: They were not far from the kingdom of heaven, in the same sense as it was said of him, who never came thither. There is no way to secure an interest in the Gospel, as to pardon, mercy, deliverance, safety and divine consolation, but by a growth in grace and holiness, which gives an entrance into the choicest mercies and privileges thereof.

It is a comely thing to fee a christian green and flourishing in spiritual affections, and it is the more levely, because it is so rare. The generality take up with those measures, which neither glorify God, nor produce durable peace for themselves. What men pretend and complain of herein, is the difficulty of the work; they can (as they suppose) preserve their present station, but to prefs forward, this is too hard for them: But this complaint is unequal, unjust, and adds to the guilt of their floth ; it reflects on our Saviour's words, " My yoke is eafy, and my bur-" den light;" it expresseth unbelief in the promifes of God, which tender fuch supplies of grace, as to render all the ways of wildom eafy, full full of mercy and peace; and it is contrary to the experience of all, who have with any fincecity engaged in the ways of Gospel obedience. The whole cause of the pretended difficulty, lies in themselves alone; they will retain fame things or things, which are inconfiltent with a progress in spiritual-mindedness; whereas the Apostle tells us, Heb. Kil. 1. that in this cafe, " We must " call off every weight, and the fin which doth " most easily beset us," if we intend to run with joy and with fuccels, the race that is let before us. These professors will also dwell ansimally. upon the entrances of religion, in the first and lowest exercife of grace 2 Some are always beginning at religion, and the beginning of things is always difficult; they delign not to be complete in the whole will of God, nor to give all graces their perfect work: Hence the Scripture calls such perions HABES and CARNAL, compared with others, who from their activity and progress in the divine life, are fliled sTRONG MEN, and sPI-RITUAL: The former, only do what they judge necessary to them in their present circumstances; they do not attempt a thorough work, and thus are always making estays, and so give over.

Whilst it is thus with any, they will always be deluded with the apprehensions of insuperable difficulties, as to the growth of their affections in spirituality: Remove these things, as they ought to be removed out of the way, and we shall find

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all the paths in which we are to walk towards God, to be pleasantness and peace. This is the first cause, whence affections truly renewed, do not thrive in an affimulation and conformity to heavenly things; men take up with their present attainments, and then pretend discouragements and difficulties in attempting spiritual growth in the inward man; but they may thank themselves, if, as they bring no honour to Christ, so they have no solid peace in their own breasts.

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(2.) As the evil proceedeth from folly, so it is always the confequence of fin, of many fins of various forts. Let us not dwell on heartlefs complaints, that we do not find our affections lively and heavenly: Nor let us hearken to this or that relief and comfort under this confideration; they may be of use, when persons are under temptations, and not able to form a right judgment of themfelves: But in the course of our ordinary walk with God, they are not to be attended, much less fled to for support. The general reason of this evil state, is our own finful carelessness, negligence, and floth; with (perhaps) an indulgence to some known lust or corruption; and in vain do we feek after refreshing cordials, as tho' we were only spiritually faint, when we are nigh unto a lethargy, and stand in need of launcing and burnings. Time would fail to give instances of the fins which fail not to obstruct effectually the growth of spiritual affections: But in general, when

when professors are careless as to that continual watch which they ought to keep; whilst they are negligent in holy duties, either as to the seasons, or manner of their performance; when they are strangers to spiritual meditation, and self-examination; whilst they inordinately pursue the things of the world; or are so tender and delicate that they will not attempt the hardship of an heavenly life and conversation, either as to the inward or outward man; much more, when they are vain and corrupt in their communication, and under the predominant influence of some particular lust; it is absurd to think of thriving in spiritual affections.

And now, fee you not the folly and finfulness of this fruitless, lifeless conduct? Are you not convinced, that there is a necessity of making a daily progress in spiritual-mindedness? Those who have made the greatest progress in the conformity of their affections unto things heavenly, know most of its necessity, excellency, and defirableness; yea, without some advance, these things will not be known: Such will testify, that the more they attain herein, the more they fee there is yet to be attained, and the more do they desire to attain what is yet behind. Phil. iii. 13, 14. But not to advance at all, is destructive to the genuine property of Gospel grace; is contrary to the invaluable promises of the sacred oracles, which are the principal supports of the faith, 1.5

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faith, hope, and comfort of the christian; is a fignal contempt of the love, faithfulness, and wisdom of God, who hath given us those promises to engage us to grow and advance; is repugnant to the honour of Gospel grace, as those would carry us so far, and no faither in the way to glory; is that which hath lost the reputation and glory of the religion of Jesus in the world; and is utterly inconsistent with all solid peace of conscience.

And yet there is THAT, which is worse than what we have now insisted on, and more opposite to the growth of affections in conformity to spiritual things. This is

2. Spiritual decay manifesting itself in sensible and wishle effects. A little must be offered respecting this world condition, as it is obstructive of the assimilation of spiritual affections to heavenly things; and directly opposite to the grace and duty of being spiritually-minded.

It should be observed, that there may be a time of temptation, in which the soul may apprehend, not only a decay in, but an utter loss of all spiritual affections, when in sact it is the reverse. Some have judged, that "the Lord had forsaken and sorgotten them," when he had not; and many under temptations, have apprehended, that they have forsaken God, when they have not done so. A man in the night may think he hath lost his way and be in great distress, when at the same

fame time he is in his proper road; and thus temptation brings darkness, and often leads into mistakes, and to a falle judgment in spiritual things: This I would separate from the present confideration; and should also remark, that there may be a decay in the affections, as to their actings, at least as to the outward symptoms and effects of them, and their operations towards spiritual things may be less sensible, and yet no decay of grace in the affections, as renewed. But when it is fo, this is a burthen to the christian; he will have a godly jealoufy over himfelf, left the decays he experiences, should not be in the natural, but the spiritual man; he will labour also that in all duties, and at all times, it may be with him, as in days of old; and there will not be in him any decay of holiness of life, or remilnels in religious duties; grace will in this cale more vigoroufly exert itself in the other powers and faculties of the foul, as the judgment and the will, in approbation of, and firm adherence to spiritual things.

But when men find their affections quick, active, and intent on other things, it is in vain for them to comfort themselves, that the decays they find, are in their affections as natural, and not as spiritual. If we see a man in his old age grow more in love with the things of the world, and less with the things of God; surely, it is not through the weakness of nature, but through the

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the strength of sin. Decay in spiritual affections is a woeful state, and never enough to be lamented; it is a direct contradiction to that spiritual-mindedness which is life and peace,; and a consumption which threatens the soul with destruction every day. And yet, is it not an evil almost epidemical among professors? So, provident is it in many, that they seem to be utterly destinate it in many, that they seem to be utterly destinated.

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Now besides all that fally and sin, which we before discovered as the causes of want of growth in spiritual affections; which in this case of their decay, are more abominable, there is a multiplication of evils, wherewith this state of mind is accompanied. It is that, which of all things, Christ is mest displeased with, in churches, or profeffors: He pities them in their temptations he fuffers with them in their perfecution, and he intergedes for them on a fudden furprifal; but he threatens them under their spiritual decays. Rev. ii. 4. 5. and iii. 2. He testifies his displenfare against all such, and if he be against us, who shall plead for use It is that also wherewith above all things the Holy Spirit is grieved : It is his work to give grace an increase and progress in our fouls: When a wife tender parent hath, been diligent in the use of all means for the education of a child, and after having fome good hopes of him, he finds him flacken in his diligence, careless in his calling, and delighting in evil company,

pany, how much is he grieved, how dejected and affliched! Now, the heart of the divine spirit is infinitely more tender towards us, than that of the most tender affectionate parent can be towards an only child; and when he both nourished and brought us up to some growth in spiritual affections, for us to become cold, dull, earthly-minded, cleaving to the pleasures or lusts of this world, how is he grieved, how is he provoked! To grieve the Holy Spirit, and not be grieved for it, there cannot be a greater evidence of a profligate hardness in sin.

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Spiritual decays are absolutely inconfistent also with all comfortable affurance of the love of God. As professors grow cold, and decay in their spiritual affections, stupidity of conscience, and security of mind grow upon them. To suppose, that peace with God, and a good hope of eternal life, should be consistent with an habitual decay in gracious affections, is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, and the supposition would be the bane of religion. It is impossible, that many professors, whom we see and converse with, should have any solid peace with God. Do men gather figs from thorns? It is a fruit that will not grow on a vain, earthly, selfish frame of mind, and convertation. Nothing can be fo ruinous to our profession, if not to our souls, as once to suppose, it is an easy matter, a thing of course to maintain our peace with God. God I 2 forbid.

forbid, but that our utmost diligence, and contimed endeavours to thrive in every grace, should be requifite thereunte. The whole beauty and glory of our religion depends hereon. Add to this, the decay now described, is a dangerous symptom of an evil state, and that those in whom it is, will at last be found to be but hypocrites. Some suppose, that no man is an hypocrite, but he that pretends himself to be, in religion, what he is not; and what he knows, or at least might eafily know himself not to be: But the man, who under light, profession, gifts, and duties, doth habitually and willingly fail in any point of fincerity, he is no less a periffing bypocrite than the former. I do not fay, that every one in whom there is a prevalent decay in spiritual affections, is an hypocrite: Far be it! But I must say, that where it continues without remedy, it is such a symptom of hypocrify, as that he who is wife, and hath a concern for his foul, will not rest until he hath fearched it to the bottom; and whoever finds himself in this wretched frame, if he rests in it without groaning, and labouring for deliverance, can have no well-grounded hopes in himself of immortality; rather he is in those paths which go down to the chambers of death.

It is a most false notion which some have entertained, "that they can easily retrieve, and "deliver themselves from this state, when there is an absolute necessity for it." Every decay

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is dangerous, especially such as the mind is ready to plead for, and to countenance itself in; and be assured, recovery from backsliding is the hardest task in christianity, and of which very sew make comfortable or honourable work. You will readily attend then to the following advice, suitable to those who find themselves under such decays, who are sensible of, and would be delivered from them.

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1. Remember former things; call to mind how it was with you in the fpring and vigour of your affections, and compare your present state, enjoyment, quiet and peace, with what they were then. This will be a great stimulative of return to God; and he himself makes it on his part a ground and reason of his return to us in mercy. and love. Jer. ii. 2. Though his people are under manifold decays, he will remember their first love, with its operations and fruits in trials and temptations, and thus his compassions are moved towards them. And the way to engage God thus to remember it, is for us to remember; with longing of foul, that it were with us, as in those former days, when we had the love of espousals for God in Christ. This is the way whereby antient faints refreshed and encouraged themselves under their greatest despondencies; so. did David for instance, Ps. xlii. 6. "O my God, " my foul is cast down within me, therefore " will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, es and and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." He found support and refreshment in calling to remembrance the days of old, and his fongs of praise in the night, when in spiritual converse and communion with God. And I have known one, who in the depth of diffress through temptation, was going to destroy himself; but in the very instant of ruin, was relieved and delivered by a remembrance that fuch a time, in such a place, he had with intense affections towards God, poured forth his foul in fervent prayer unto Let the backflider then remember whence he is fallen; remember when in-your lying down and riling up, you had many thoughts of God and of the things of God, and how fweet and precious they were to you; remember when you had zeal for his glory, and delight in his worthip, when you poured forth your fouls with freedom and enlarged affections before him, and rejoiced in the tokens of his love; remember what peace, what ferenity, what joy you had, whilst it was thus with you. On the other hand, consider what you have gotten, fince you have declined from the ways of God, in any measure or degree: Dare to deal plainly with yourfelves: Is not all your intercourse with heaven, either form, custom, and selfishness; or attended with anxieties and fears? Do you truly know either how to live, or how to die? Are you not sometimes doubtful, toffed to and fro, reftless and disquieted?

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quieted? You majt, unless hardened through the deceitfulness of fin. What have all your new lovers done for you, that you have entertained in the room of God, Christ and spiritual things? Speak plainly, have they not defiled, wounded, weakened, distressed you, and brought you into that condition that you know not what you are, nor to whom you do belong? What are your thoughts when you are most yourselves; do you not sometimes pant inwardly, and say, "O that it were with us as in former days!

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If you are no way affected with the remembrance of former things, then either you were never ipiritually renewed, and so never had any real communion with God in religious duties; or you are hardened through the deceitfulnels of sin, and there is now no way left to make an impression of spiritual things upon your minds. You have truly nothing left in religion, but the fear of hell and trouble of duties.

As for thole to whom this frame is a burden, there is no means more effectual to fir them up to endeavours after deliverance, than a continual remembrance of former things, of those experiences they have had of holy communion with God. This will revive, quicken, and strengthen the things that are ready to die.

2. We should consider also, that though there are many threatnings in Scripture against backsliding, and backsliders, yet there are peculiar calls.

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and promifes also to those that are in such a state: And know affuredly, that upon your compliance, or non-compliance with them, depends your everlasting blessedness or woe. Attend to that divine call and promise in Jer. iii. 12, 13, 14. Add to it also the bleffed promise, Hof. xiv. 4. I will heal their backflidings, I will love them " freely; for mine anger is turned away from " them." If you defign to live and not die, it must be by yielding obedience unto this call, and pleading this promise before God, mixing it with faith: Here lies your great encouragement and direction, herein is your only relief. As you value your fouls, defer not the duty to which you are called, one moment; you know not how foon you may be out of the reach of calls. and of promises; and he that can hear them without flirring up himfelf fincerely and ardently to comply with them, hath already made a great progress towards that length.

3. As for such persons, who on these considerations do not only desire, but will endeavour also to retrieve themselves from this condition: I shall at present, give no advice but this; BE IN EARNEST. As the prophet speaks in another case, if you will return, return and came, make thorough work of it: At one time or other, you must do so, or you will perish. Why not now? Why is not this the best season? Who knows but it may be the only time you will have for it?

It were easy to multiply all forts of arguments to this purpose. Trifling endeavours, occasional resolutions and attempts (like the early cloud and morning dew) shifting with warnings and convictions by renewed duties, until their impressions are worn out, will ruin your fouls. Unless there be universal diligence, and permanency in your endeavours, you are undone. Ye shall affuredly know the Lord, if you follow on to know him. Though the progress of our affections in conformity to spiritual and heavenly things, may be flow, imperceptible, yea totally obstructed for a feason; and not only so, but through our negligence, floth, and fin, may fall under decays, and the foul thereby be guilty of backfliding from God; yet if they are spiritually renewed, in the diligent use of means, they will grow up into an holy affimilation to those things on which they are fet, and become more spiritual and heavenly every day.

CHAP. X.

Shewing the proper objects on which spirituall affections are set, with the reasons of their adherence to them.

The object about which our affections are conversant, and to which they do adhere. What

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this object is? or what are the spiritual things, upon which our affections are to be fet? hath been indeed already declared, when treating of the objects of our thoughts and meditations "; they are the same: Yea, the fixing of our affections upon them, is the fpring and cause of our thoughts about them. As all things in religion, both respecting faith and practice; as beaven and the things that are above, eternal things; as Christ in his mediatorial character and glory at the right hand of God; as God, the fountain whence all spiritual things proceed; his being and divine attributes, with all the diffinguishing relations he hath taken on himself towards his people; are the PROPER OBJECTS of our thoughts, fo are they of our affections: Therefore, we will proceed to enquire into the true notion of spiritual things, or what it is which renders them the formal proper objects of spiritual affections, and is the reason of their adherence to them. For men may have false notions of spiritual things, under which they may like and embrace them with unrenewed affections.

r. The first confideration of heavenly things, under which renewed affections do with fatisfaction and delight cleave unto them, is, as they have an infinite beauty, amiableness, and goodness in them, alone able to give complacency and rest. Love is the most ruling, and prevalent affection.

in the whole foul; but it cannot be fixed on any object, without an apprehension (either true or falle) of an amiableness and desirableness in itfrom a fulcable goodness to all its delires. To have our affections to cleave to spiritual things in a due manner, 'tis requilite that we apprehend, and do find a goodness, a beauty, and thence an amiableness and defirableness in them. Many pretend to love God and spiritual things, but they know not why: They know well enough, why they cannot tell; they are afraid of him, and suppose they ought to love him, and therefore pretend to to do, though they know they do not; they do but flatter him with their lips, when their hearts are far from him. Many have a traditional apprehension that they ought to love God; they know no reason why they should not, and know it will be ill for them if they do not, and thefe take it for granted that they really do ; On how few are there, who have that spiritual discernment and apprehension of the divine excellencies, that view of the excellency of the goodness and love of God in Christ, as thereby alone to be drawn after him, and to delight in him; and yet this is the ground of all real love unto God.

Possibly, some cannot say that a distinct apprehension of these things, was the first soundation and cause of their love to God; and yet are satis-

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fied, that they do love him with all their fouls, And they may not be deceived; for God fometimes casts the skirt of his love over the heart of a poor finner, and thus efficaciously draws it to himself, by a mere sense of the love it hath received, without a diffinet apprehenfion of the things mentioned. When God hath shed abroad his love in the foul, it follows after him with all its affections. But if we would have refreshing evidences of our love unto God, as fincere; if we would have it flourish, be fervent, and constant, we must exercise ourselves unto the contemplation of the divine goodness, and of its suitableness to our souls in and by Jesus Christ. 'Tis impossible to cleave to any spiritual thing whatever with fincere affections, but under the notion ec that it hath a real worth or excellency in it-" felf," and also " that it is suitable and de-" firable unto us." And it is mournful, to fee how many walk at random in profession, who know neither what they do, nor where they go.

As to fix our affections on spiritual things in a due manner, we must discern an absolute goodness in them; so we must see it comparatively, as respecting all other things, by which they have a preference in our affections before and above them all. The trial of love lies in the prevailing degree. If we love father, mother, wise, children, houses, lands, money, more than Christ, we do not love him at all. Nor is there any equality allowed

allowed in this matter; we may not equally love temporal and spiritual things: If we love not Christ, more than all those things, we love him not at all. Wherefore that our affections may cleave to things spiritual and heavenly, we must see an excellency in them, rendering them more desirable than all other things whatever. This is the only stable foundation of all divine affections; a spiritual view and judgment of a goodness, an excellency in them, infinitely above whatever is in

the most desirable things of this world.

If the affections of many high pretenders to religion, were weighed in this balance, I fear they would be found light and wanting: However, it is the duty of them who would not be deceived in this matter of eternal importance, to examine what is that goodness and excellency in spiritual things, for which they defire and esteem Let not any deceive themselves with vain pretences. Whilft their valuation of prefent enjoyments doth evidently engage all their affections, care, diligence and industry; and they are cold, formal, negligent about spiritual things; we must say, " How dwelleth the love of God in them?" Much more, when we see men not only giving up the whole of their time, and the vigour of their spirits, but facrificing their consciences also to the attaining of dignities, honours, wealth and ease in the world; who know in their own hearts that they partake of the the Lord's Supper, and perform other religiousduties with respect to temporal advantages; 'tishard to conceive, how it is possible, such shoulddiffern and approve of a goodness and excellency

in spiritual things, above all others.

It should be considered also, that all spiritual things do proceed from, and are refolved into an infinite fountain of goodness; hence renewed affections find full fatisfaction in them, and obtain absolute rest. It is otherwise as to all temporal things, all of them together cannot compose the mind in rest and peace for one hour: Hence they are called broken cifferns that will hold no water, Let a man prize them at the highest rate, possible for a rational creature to be feduced unto, of which there have been prodigious instances; let him poffess them in abundance, beyond whatever any man enjoyed in this world; let him be affured of the utmost peaceable continuance in the enjoyment of them, that his and their natures are capable of; yet he could not dare to pretend. that all his affections were filled and fatisfied with them, or that they afforded him perfect rest and peace: Should he do fo, the working of his mind every day, would convince him of his falsehood, and his folly. But all fpiritual things are derived from, and do lead to that which is infinite; which is therefore able to fill all our affections, and to give them full fatisfaction with rest and peace: They all lead us to the fountain of

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of living waters, the eternal spring of goodness and blessedness; and though we cannot attain to a sull rest and satisfaction in this life, yet the more we contemplate spiritual things, and the more simily we adhere to them, the nearer approaches we make to our rest and center.

2. Spiritual things are to be confidered, as filled with divine wisdom. God's essential wisdom is one of the most amiable excellencies of his holy nature; and all spiritual truths, all things by which God reveals himself unto men; and all the ways and means of our approach to him in faith and obedience through Christ Jesus, are Now wildom in itself, filled with divine wildom. and in all its effects, is attractive of rational affections. A wife and good man commands the affections of others (unless it be their interest to hate and oppose him, as commonly it is) and where there is true wildom in the conduct of civil affairs, fober men cannot but approve of like, and delight in it: And so is divine wildom attractive of spiritual affections. The Psalmist admired and delighted in the works of God, because " he hath made them all in wisdom:" The characters of divine wildom which are upon them, engage the foul to a delightful contemplation of them. But all the treasures, all the glory of this wildom, are displayed in the great foiritual things of the Gospel, in the mystery of God in Christ, and in the dispensation of his

grace

fills the fouls of real christians with holy admiration and delight, and they accordingly cleave unto them with all their affections.

But this wisdom of God is foolishness to the greatest part of mankind; it was so of old, as the Apostle testifies, I Cor. i. and it continues yet to be; therefore is the mystery of the Gospel despised by most that enjoy it; and no man ever will have any spiritual affections to spiritual things, who hath not a spiritual view of the wisdom of God in them. When our minds discern and are raised to an admiration of infinite wisdom in divine revelation, then will our affections cleave.

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2. The acting of our affections in their adherence to spiritual things, is perfective of our present There is nothing more vile, Rate and condition. more contemptible, more like to beafts in brutality, and to hell in punishment, than is the condition of them, who have given up their affections, and enflaved their natures to things earthly and fenfual: But the fixing of spiritual affections on spiritual objects, is perfective of our present state; not that we can attain perfection by it, but therein our fouls are in a progress towards perfection. By how much vile affections fixed on, and purfuing things carnal and fenfual, do debase our nature beneath its rational constitution; so much do spiritual affections fixed on

and cleaving to things spiritual and heavenly exalt our nature above its mere natural capacity, making an approach to the flate of angels, and of just men made perfect; the mind is elevated. and enlightened with true wisdom and understanding. Again, as the power of carnal affections fills the foul with tumult, diforder, fhame, and fear, (unless men are utterly profligate,) and the mind and conscience is a very hell for confusion and troubles; so spiritual affections duly exercised on their proper objects, do preserve all things within in peace and order. " From whence " come wars and fightings among you?" Whence are all the diforders in your minds, whence your vexations, disquietude, and unruly passions? Are: they not from hence, from your lufts, the diforderly affections that prevail in you? Search yourfelves, and you will quickly fee whence all your troubles do arife; but some are never in such confusion, as when they are forced to retire into work transferance to the transfer how

The due exercise of our affections on heavenly; things, hath quite another tendency and effect: It so unites the mind to them, it so engages them to it, as that all the powers and faculties are in a progress towards their persection. True wisdom, with soundness of judgment, holiness in the affections, liberty in the will, power in the heart, peace in the conscience, do in their measures all, ensue hereon. But whatever tastes we may have

we have of them; they will not flourish in, they will not abide with us, in any constancy, unless we are thus spiritually minded.

4. In the future enjoyment of the prefere objects of our spiritual affections, doth our eternal beffedness confist. All men who are convinced of a future eternal state, do defire, when they depart hence, to enter into bleffedness and glory; and yet, what that blelledness is, even as to the general nature of it, but few do know, and it they did, they would not know how to defire it! Heaven or bleffedness is nothing but the full enjoyment of what we the here to love, and to delight in ; of that which is the object of our affections as ipirimally renewed: Herein, how few have either interest or concern; but this is that which giveth life to the affections of real children's they know that in the enjoyment of God in Christ, doth confilt their eternal bleffednels; Mow this. is their happiness and glory, how it will give them an everlatting overflowing fatisfaction and reft, they understand by the first fruits which. they here receive. This is the ultimate object of. their affections in this world, and the more they are fixed and exercised upon them, the nearer approaches they make unto this bleffed frate. The more we love God, the more we are like unto him, and nearer to the enjoyment of him. swed year our safter ray bave

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Of the way of the foul's application to spiritual objects, by its affections.

ITAVING confidered the nature of spiritual affections as renewed by grace; and under what notions they cleave unto their proper objects; we come to enquire

III. Into the way or manner of their application to those objects, which is an effectial branch of spiritual mindedness. This shall be described

in a few particulars.

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1. It is necessary that our adherence to all spiritual things, be not only with love and delight. but FIRM AND STABLE. The affections are the powers and infruments of the foul; by which it applies and cleaves to any object whatever; and this is their nature and use with reference to things spiritual. Translent thoughts of spiritual things, with vanishing defires may arise from prefent convictions, as they did with them, who cried out, "Lord give us evermore of this bread;" and immediately left him. Such thoughts and defires are common to all forts of men, yea to the worft," Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But affections which are transient, unstable, and vanishing as to their exercise and operations; affections on and off; earnest for a little while, and then cold misch albeite and

and indifferent, are without a doubt INSINCERE, and can have no transforming efficacy upon the foul. Let none therefore please themselves with the operations of transient affections respecting spiritual things, be they never so urgent, pleafant, or frequent in their returns; they have deceived multitudes: If our affections unto spiritual things are SINCERE, where they are the true genuine application of the foul, they are at all times firm and flable. Love and delight are kept to fuch a constant exercise, as renders them immoveable; and to this we are exhorted, I Cor. xv. 58. 66 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye. " Redfaft, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foralmuch as you know. that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

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2. It is required, that the foul bath a favour to the things to which it adheres. The affections are the palate of the foul, by which it taftes of all things, either received or refused; and it will not long cleave to any thing, which the affections do not relish. When a man is pleased with spiritual things and exercises, as is the palate with fuitable and proper food; and also finds internal nourithment and comfort from them, then doth he adhere to them in a due manner. spiritual taste is the ground of all experience; it is not what we have heard or understood only, but what we have tried or tafted; this makes us to long for what we have formerly enjoyed, and frengthens les -

firengthens faith as to what we pray for and expect.

As a man under a languishing fickness, or when chaftened with strong pain, so as that his foul abhorreth bread and his daily meat; can remember what appetite he had, and with what gust he was used in the days of health to receive his food, which makes him to know that there is fuch a condition, and to defire a reftoration to it: So is it with a fin-fick foul; it finds no favour. no fweetness in spiritual things, yet doth it remember former days, when they were very fweet unto him; and if he hath any spark of spiritual life remaining, it will ftir him up to feek with all diligence after a recovery. Have we tafted that the Lord is gracious, and experienced a relish in the word and ordinances of God? If we have not, it is to be feared we never yet had the least fincere love to spiritual things : If we have, how is it we can reft one moment, if under spiritual decays, without endeavours after healing and reftoration.

3. It is necessary that our affections be so set on spiritual things, as to be a continual spring of spiritual thoughts and meditations. No man can be so sorsaken of reason, as to suppose that he hath any sincere affections for what he thinks but little on, or not at all; or that he can have a true affection for any thing which will not excite, and generate continual thoughts about it. Let

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men try themselves as to their relations, or their pleasures and enjoyments, or the objects of their predominant lusts, and they will find how things are stated in their own minds. All men who pretend to love God, Christ, and spiritual things, and yet know in their own hearts that they very little think of, or meditate upon them, may be assured both their pretence and religion are vain. Where our affections are sincere, and duly placed on heavenly things, so as to denominate us spiritually-minded, they will be a constant spring of spiritual thoughts and meditations.

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When our affections are thus applied to spicitual things, they will be prevalent and vistarious against all folicitations, and allurements to draw them off to any other objects. The great work of all due spiritual foce, is to tempt and divert our affections from their proper object: Such are Satan's injection of blafphemous thoughts concerning God, his being, nature, and will, and the diffresses to which he reduces the christian, thro darkness and misrepresentations of God, and his goodness. But the high road and constant practice of our enemies, is, the foliciting of our affections unto objects that are in themselves, or in the degree of our love towards them, evil and finful: Of the first, are all fenfual pleasures, as drunkennoss, uncleanness, gluttony, chambering and wantonness; of the latter, is all our inordinate love unto felf, families, the world, or the things n before

things of it. Herein confifts the pature and officacy of most of those temptations, with which we have to conflict. Hereby do our enemies endeavour to beguile us, with fair and false reprefentations of other beloveds, that our hearts should not be preserved as a chasse virgin in all their affections for Christ,

It is almost incredible how apt we are to be beguiled by the specious pretences wherewith we are follicited; and too many are deluted; and tuined by giving place unto them. It is no ordinary, no easy thing to preserve our affections pure, entire, and steady in their vigorous adherence to spiritual things: Watchfulness, daily examination of ourselves, prayer, and the exercise of faith, are requisite hereunted, and for want of a proper attention to these things, and with a respect to this end. " the preservation of "our spiritual affections in their integrity," many, even before they are aware, die away as to all power and vigous of spiritual life.

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beautify, will give a great raisf against the remainders of that vanity of mind, with which the christian is often peoplexed. The instability of the mind, its readiness to receive impressions from things vain and useless, and the irregularity of the thoughts, are a continual burden to the real disciple of Christ: And nothing can give the soul any ralief herein, nothing can give bounds tions, nothing can dry up the springs from whence they arise, or render the soil barren as to their maintenance and production, but only the growth of spiritual affections, with their continual algorous exercise on heavenly things. This will insensibly take off that relish which the mind hath found in things present, earthly, and sensual, and make them insipid, sapless to the whole soul. This will so place the cross of Christ in particular on the heart, as that the world shall be crucified unto it, losing all that brightness, beauty, and savour, which it before made use of to solicit and tempt our minds unto it.

Moreover, this frame of fairit, and this alone, will keep us on our watch against all those ways and means, by which the vanity of the mind is cherished and excited: Such are the roving of the outward ferries, especially that of the eye; hence the Pfalmift prayed, of turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." If the eyes rove after vain objects, the mind will ruminate upon them; and another holy man affirms, that he had made a covenant with his eyes, to keep them from fixing on fuch objects, as might folicit luft, or excite corrupt affections. Of the fame nature with the outward fenfes is the inceffant working of the fancy and imagination, which of itfelf is evil continually: This is the food of a ebeapd. vain

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vain mind, and the vehicle or means of conveyance for all temptations from Satan and the world: Add to thefe, the fundry occasions of life, and common conversation, are usually turned or abused to the same end, to the exciting and exercising the vanity of the mind. But our affections are fixed on spiritual things, if our minds will constantly be under a warning or charge to keep diligent watch against all these things, that the vanity they so abhor may have no place. And let it be remembered, that without this prevalency in the mind, a work of mortification will never be carried on in the foul.

CHAP. XII.

I there is a different property of the second
Displaying the happy fruits of the grace and duty of spiritual-mindedness.

TAVING largely, and I hope clearly, and agreeable to the divine records, stated and explained both the grace and duty of spiritual mindedness, I would now attempt some description of the bleffings flowing from, and connected therewith; they are LIFE and PEACE. Two things are here to be confidered.

1. What is meant by life and peace.

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2. In what sense spiritual-mindedness is life and peace, and what it contributes to them.

- 1. To be spiritually-minded is LIFE. The spiritual life of which we are made partakers in this world, is threefold.
- the just by faith do live, as freed from the condemnatory sentence of the law. Rom. v. 18.

 "The righteousness of one comes on all that believe to justification of life." It gives unto all true believers in Christ, a right and title to life: But this is not the life here intended; this depends on the sovereign grace of God by Jesus Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness to us.
- (2.) There is a life of fanctification. As life in the foregoing fense, is opposed to death spiritual. respecting its guilt, and the condemning sentence with which 'tis accompanied; fo in this, it is opposed unto spiritual death, respecting its internal power and efficacy in the foul. This is that life wherewith we are quickened by the fpirit of Christ, and the life to which the Apostle plainly refers in the text. In the four first verses. of the chapter he described the life of justification in its nature and causes; and in the following, he treats of death spiritual in sin, with the life of fanclification, by which we are freed therefrom. And to be spiritually-minded is this life, in that it is the principal effect and fruit of it. The life itself confifts in the communication of a principle of life, or of faith and obedience to the powers

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powers of the foul, enabling us to live unto God. To be spiritually-minded, cannot be this life formally, but it is that in which the power of this principle of life doth first and chiefly exert All exertions of grace, all duties of obedience internal and external, do proceed from this spring and fountain. Nothing is acceptable unto God, but what is influenced by, and is an effect of it; but it principally exerts its virtue and efficacy in rendering our minds spiritual, which if not effected, of it we are utterly destitutes The immediate work of the principle of life in our fanctification, is to renew the mind and make it spiritual, and will gradually carry it on to that degree, which is here called being spirituallyminded.

It should be observed also, that spiritual-mindedness is the proper evidence of this life. The communication of the life of fanctification being by an almighty act, is not so easily discernible, as to help us to make a right judgment of it from its essence or form: But where things are in themselves indiscernible, we may know them by their proper and inseparable fruits, which are therefore often called by the names of the essence, or form itself. Such is the being spiritually-minded, with respect to the life of sanctification, it is an inseparable property thereof, and whereby it infallibly evidences itself unto them who possess it. In these respects, as 'tis the K 2 principal

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principal effect, and the proper evidence, spiritual-mindedness is the life of sanctification.

(3.) Life is taken for the comforts and refreshments of life. So speaks the Apostle, I Thes. iii. 8. "Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord." Now our life will do us good, we have the comforts and joys of life; and these are more life, than life itself. These make life both pleasant and desirable, and is what the Apostle principally intended in the expression. It is life, a chearful joyous life, a life worth the living: In explication and confirmation of which, the Apostle added, that to be spiritually-minded is also peace.

PEACE is twofold.

"through Jesus Christ," which is the original spring and sountain of all consolation to the christian: But this is not what was here intended, for justification is the immediate cause and ground of this peace, not our sanctification. Peace with God through the blood of Christ, is one thing, and peace in our own breasts is another. The influences of the Holy Spirit in witnessing to our adoption, &c. are required unto the former; but our own activity and diligence in duties, and the exercise of all grace, are requisite to the latter.

(2.) Peace fignifies, and is here to be taken for a peculiar fruit of the spirit; consisting in a quietness and composure of mind even amidst difficulties, temptations, troubles, and such other things

things as are apt to fill us with fears, disquietude, and despondency. This is that which keeps the soul in its own power, free from transports by fears or passions; and is influenced and kept alive by the contemplation of the love of God in Christ, and its divine sruits. As peace in its primary idea, includes an inward freedom from those troubles, to which the christian is outwardly exposed, so there are two things from which we are secured by that peace, which is an effect of being spiritually-minded.

First, From offences. Of the danger of these, we are often warned in the Scriptures. All ages, all times and feafons, are filled with them, and they prove pernicious to the fouls of many. Such are the scandalous divisions that are among christians; the endless differences of opinions in religion, and diversity of modes and practifes in the worship of God; the falls, the fins of some profelfors, and the fearful ends of others; the reproaches that are cast on all that engage in any peculiar way of holiness and strictness of life; thefe are OFFENCES, by which numbers are either disquieted, or infected and subverted. Against any noxious influence on our minds from thele things we are secured by this peace. Ps. cxix. 165. " Great peace have they that love thy law, " and nothing shall offend them." To love the law or word of God, is the chief part of our being heavenly-minded; yea virtually it compre-

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her ngs hends the whole: And they that do thus love the facred oracles, none of the things before-mentioned, nor any other of the like nature, shall be an offence, or cause of their falling into sin: The reason is, because they have such an experience in themselves of the truth, power, essistance, and holiness of the Gospel, as that the miscarriages of professors shall never be to them an occasion of being offended at Christ. It is a sign of a very evil frame of heart, when men on suffering loss in their temporal concerns by the evil conduct of professors, are led to cast resections on that religion which they profess, professing the same themselves.

Secondly, By this peace, the christian is secured, or composed under this frowns of the world, persecutions, and afflictions of all sorts. It is known by all, too well known, with what dejection and disquietude these things are apt to fill the human mind; what sears, troubles, and sorrows they reslect upon us. Against all these effects, this peace gives us security; it preserves to us a peaceable, yea, a joyous life in our consist with them.

Life and peace, as here joined together, do comprize an holy frame of heart and mind, in which the believing foul finds quietness, rest, refreshment, and delight in God, in the midst of temptations, afflictions, offences, and sufferings. The foul is so fixed in its trust in God, and love to Christ, as not greatly to be cast down or difordered

ordered with any thing that befals it; the life and peace it possesses, gives the christian satisfaction and chearfulness in himself, though he walks in the valley of the shadow of death. Spiritual-mindedness will give life and peace under all occurrences.

2. Our next enquiry is, bow this spiritualmindedness is life and peace? Or what it contributes to them, and how it produceth the frame of heast and mind so expressed? And this it doth several ways.

(1.) It is the only means, on our part, of retaining a sense of divine love. The love of God, as thed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghoft, is the first and only foundation of all durable comforts; this God communicates by an act of fovereign grace; for the most part without any preparation for it in ourselves. "He creates the "fruit of the lips, peace, peace." But altho" divine love be in itself unchangeable, yet a sense of it in our breaks may be lost, which David and others found by woful experience. There is. not any thing in which our care and diligence are more concerned, than in retaining a refreshing sense of the love of God to us: For any who (through the riches of divine grace) have tafted of its confolations and joys, to be negligent in cherishing and preserving it, is a provocation of which at one time or other they will be deeply sensible; and yet there are few pro-K4 fellors:

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felfors, but what have too much reason to bewail their folly in this respect. Every intimation of divine love, is an inestimate jewel, which if fafely treasured up in the heart, adds to our spiritual riches; but being loft, will fooner or later affect us with deep forrow. The great means of retaining a fense of the love of God in us, the only fpring of life and peace to the foul, is this grace and duty of being spiritually-minded: Which is evident from the very nature of the duty; hereby the foul is preserved in a frame meet to receive and retain the impressions of divine love; the thoughts and affections are fixed upon the grace and love of God, which is one great means whereby this treasure is preserved: A person spiritually-minded, and he alone, will duly value and prize all the intimations and pledges of divine love; and he only will know how to use and improve them. They are gracious provisions wherewith we are furnished, to help us in all our duties, conflicts and trials; and on all occasions are they to be called over, and produced for our spiritual relief and encouragement. Thus they are fafely retained; in the due improvement of them they grow brighter in our minds every day, and are ready for use, in which posture they are safely preserved.

(2.) This frame of mind casts out all principles and causes of trouble and disquietude, which are inconsistent with life and peace. It will cast out

all fitthiness and superfluity of naughtiness from our minds: This ftands in direct opposition to our being spiritually-minded, and where it is, there is neither life nor peace. Where unclean lufts of the flesh and of the mind are absolutely predominant, the foul is not only like a troubled sea, but there is an hell within of darkness and confusion, and of enmity against God. Now the very nature of this grace, and its universal exercise, is suited to the casting out of all the relics of this filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness. It brings a principle into the mind, disectly contrary to that from whence they proceed; all the exercises of it, which we have described, have a direct tendency to the extirpation of these things which ruin life and peace, nor will they be any other way cast out: If the mind be not spiritual, it will be carnal.

Moreover, that disorder which is by nature in the affections and passions of the mind, and which is directly opposite to spiritual life and peace, is cast out, or cured hereby. It were an easy task to shew how the disorder of our affections and passions is destructive of life and peace. The contrariety that is in them, and contradiction to one another; their violence, impetuosity, and restlessness; their readiness to receive provocations on all occasions, and frequently on none at all, are sufficient evidences: Now the nature and principal effect of spiritual-mindedness, is to bring

bring all the affections and passions of our minds into that holy order in which they were created. And wherein this order falls short of that perfection which we had originally (for the remains of that disorder which sin introduced will still continue) it is recompensed by the actings of that grace communicated to us. Hereby are life and peace brought into our souls, and preserved in them.

- (3.) By spiritual-mindedness, our hearts and minds are taken off from the world, and an inordinate love to it. Where there is an inordinate love to the world, there is neither life, nor peace; every excess in it both weakens spiritual life, and difturbs, yea destroys all solid spiritual peace. Wherefore to be spiritually-minded is life and peace, because it subdues and expels that inordinate love to present things, which is destructive of both, and inconsistent with them.
- (4.) It preserves the mind in a proper, boly frame in the perfermence of all other duties. This is indispensibly requisite to the preservation of life and peace, and especially to the improvement of them. They will not abide, much less flourish, in any persons who are negligent in the duties of religion, or who do not perform them in a due manner. Spiritual-mindedness is an antidote against the chief things which impede or hinder us in a profitable attendance on holy duties. For instance,

Distraction

Distraction of thoughts and mind hath this evil effect, and the evil will not be cured by observing any particular directions; there must be a change of the whole frame of our minds. Nothing can give us relief herein, but a prevalent delight in spiritual exercises. It is this frame alone, namely, spiritual-mindedness, that creates this delight; the renewed mind and spiritual things are so suitable to each other, that on every occasion they are ready for mutual communion, and will not be separated. The distractions so much complained of, proceed from the mind's not being fixed on spiritual things with delight; hence it is easily diverted from them, and will sometimes seek occasions for such diversions.

Again, Despondency in religious duties arises from the frequent incursions of the guilt of fin; and the sole cure hereof is also by this grace and duty. To be spiritually-minded, we have before proved, is the great preservative against these disheartening incursions of sin. It is the soul's watch and guard against them, from whatever quarter they proceed: No lust or corruption can be prevalent in a spiritual mind. Again,

Weariness in and of spiritual duties abate their tendency to the improvement of life and peace in us; and the principal cure hereof, lies in that delight in spiritual things which spiritual-mindedness gives to the soul. Where there is a conftant delight in any thing, there will be no weariness,

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ness, at least, not such as shall hinder the christian from cleaving firmly to the things in which he delights: Whilst this delight therefore prevails in the mind, weariness cannot assault it. And let it be observed, that a spiritual frame of mind is the only relief against that weariness which arises from the weakness of the sless; for as it will preserve the mind from attending too much to the cry, "Spare thyself," by filling the thoughts with other things; so it will offer an holy violence to the complaints of the sless, silencing them with a sense of and delight in holy duties.

Another thing which defeats us of the benefit of holy duties, is, Grace is not ready for its due and proper exercise. The seasons for religious exercifes are come, a fense of duty excites men to an attendance on, and the performance of them: But when they engage in them, the graces of faith, love, fear, delight, &c. wherein the foul, the being of them confift, are wanting, out of the way, or not ready for a due exercise; hence many do fatisfy themselves with the mere outward performance: The heart hath been taken up with other things, due preparation hath been wanting, and fo men come to religious duties with thoughts full of earthly things, and 'tis no eafy matter in, or just after emerging from such a frame, to ftir up grace to a proper exercise. But herein is the very life of being spirituallyminded : minded; its nature is to keep and preserve all graces in a readiness for exercise, as occasions may require. This is an effectual way by which spiritual-mindedness becomes life and peace; they cannot be attained, they cannot be preserved, without such a constancy and spirituality in holy duties, as we shall never arrive at, unless spiritually-minded. But

keeps it at the nearest approaches to heaven and blessedness; which are the eternal springs of life and
peace. According to the degrees of this grace
in us, such are those of our approaches unto
God: Nearness unto him, gives us our initial
conformity unto him, by the renovation of his
image in us, and our presence with him will
give us persection therein, for when we see him,
we shall be like unto him. Oh! the peace, joy,
and felicity which await the spiritually-minded,
at the right hand of God.

And now, behold good and evil, peace and wrath, life and death have been set before you. You have had the carnal and the spiritual mind laid open; and can be no longer ignorant of the path of life which leads to the throne of God. You cannot but know which is the most defirable frame of mind, and which is attended with the happiest fruits both here and hereafter. The carnally minded do indeed flatter themselves with liberty, pleasure, peace and joy; but neither

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of them is to be found in minding the things of the field and of the world. None are greater saves, or held in more abject bondage; none are greater strangers to peace, joy, happinese, and the real comforts and enjoyments of life, than are the carnally minded. Setting afide the different recompences in the other world, spiritualmindedness in its nature and effects as to this. life, as much exceeds the opposite frame of mind. as light doth exceed darkness, or heaven the bottomless pit. There is a pleasure, a satisfaction, a joy and peace in minding spiritual things, which is unspeakable, and which a stranger intermetidles not with. The carnally minded are often as the troubled fea, through the vicifitudes. of the present state; and through earthly cares and disappointments cannot rest, but their waters cast up mire and dirt, till with piercing anguish, and without any hope, their trembling spirits leave the body, and fink into eternal oblivion and misery: The spiritually minded on the contrary enjoy a divine calm; in every dispensation of providence their heart is fixed, trufting in God: To live, they defire for no other end than to bring forth fruit unto God; and as the heart is weaned from earthly things, the loss of them doth not fink deep; they can eafily bear either to part with, or to be parted from them. What they chiefly covet is, the loving-kindness of God, spiritual bleffings in Christ Jesus, and some foretaffes

taltes of those rivers of pleasure which glide through the paradife of their heavenly fathers Enjoying thefe, they cannot but lightly effeem the momentary pleasures of this world, and must long to be put in possession of that kingdom, where their peace and joy shall be full, where the fun shall no more go down upon them, and the days of their mourning and conflict shall be d. To this bleffed frate, how can we but henceforth daily aspire? For the enjoyments and employments thereof, may we be continually preparing, by an humble walk with God, by a life of faith on Christ, and by having our affections and conversation in heaven; thus shall we not only prove ourselves of the number of the spiritually-minded, but shall assuredly leave the world as conquerors, and obtain a crown of cternal life.



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